

HENRY BORDEAUX

FOOTPRINTS BENEATH
THE SNOW



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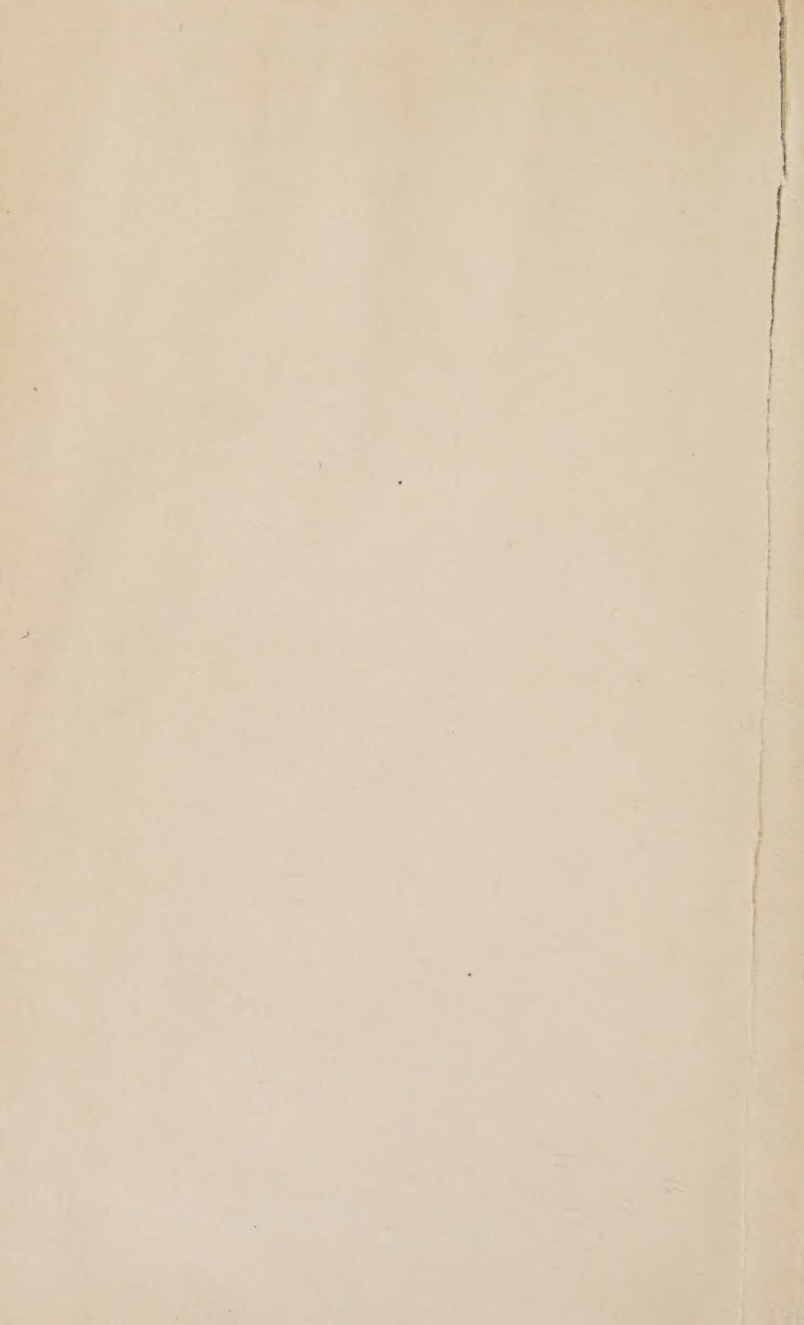
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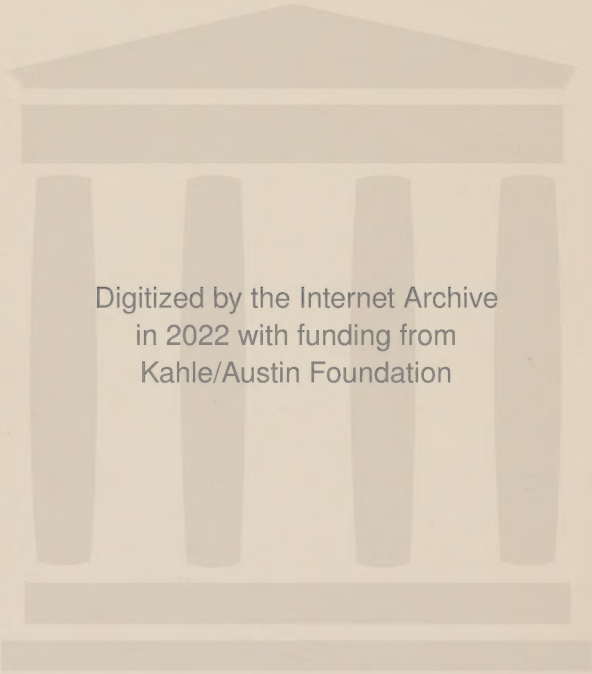
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FOOTPRINTS BENEATH
THE SNOW.

Footprints Beneath the Snow

A Novel

By
Henry Bordeaux

Author of "The Parting of the Ways," "The Woollen
Dress," "The Fear of Living," etc., etc.

Translated by
Mary Seymour Houghton

MEZZANINE



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TO PAUL BOURGET

My Dear Master and Friend:

Many years have gone by,— now nearly twenty — since an unknown youth sent you his first volume of essays,— a book bearing every evidence of extreme youth, but witnessing also to the writer's passion for literature. Instead of the non-committal card of thanks which I might have expected, I received from you a most perspicacious, most illuminating commentary on “*Ames Modernes*” the weakness of which as criticism I now realise. With that wide outlook, that art of word painting, which I had admired in your “*Essays on Contemporary Psychology*,” with that benevolence for the coming generation which is the evidence of reverence for letters, you gave me such counsel as an elder would give to a younger brother, adding these words of encouragement: “It is long since I have enjoyed reading anything as much as this volume of yours . . .” Such words from the author of “*Crime d'Amour*” and of the “*Disciple*” and even more perhaps the criticisms which accompanied and modified them, were enough to give a beginner a feeling of walking on air.

In memory of this, your reception of my first work, and with gratitude for this early manifested

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sympathy, and the friendship that followed,— such a friendship as is an honour, an inspiration, an encouragement to a young writer,— allow me to dedicate this romance to you, in the hope that, bearing the traces of all the days that have passed since then, it may be less unworthy of your notice.

In your very first letter you showed me the importance, for the historian of morals, of looking beneath the facts for the essential laws of life. You have always advised the writer of romance to subordinate himself to the object of his observation. But facts, in their bare, brutal truth, are only signs; like rind-encased fruits they must be opened, so to speak, that we may know what phases of humanity they enclose and represent. Then we find, deep within, what really is in us — that is, in man as a member of society — of the enduring, the permanent, the eternal.

It seems to me that if any thought binds my romances to one another it must be the idea of the family. The ancient theme of the domestic tragedy draws me. Our old masters who so often treated it did not say its last word. They made the hearthstone the symbol of race solidarity, they set apart special divinities to the conservation of this sacred fire. Even Venus, with all her fatal power, did not easily get the better of the humble Lares, gods of the home. Love, among the Greeks, found itself confronted with this firm and yet redoubtable force of order, innate in every heart of woman, well-born and

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of normal health. Thus Helen, after the fall of Troy and the death of Paris, serenely returns to her household tasks, and refers to her tempestuous past with the simplicity and remoteness with which one recalls a past illness. In romances love seeks refuge in death. Our classic realists make him find it in life, by accepting it.

This persistent love of life, even after the passing of the most perfect love, permits the reparation of the ruins too often caused by passion. It is a painful task to reanimate the flame of a hearth over which no one has watched. To build is always hard, but the work of building is full of happiness. To rebuild is a harder task and not exempt from melancholy. God has kept for himself the right to pronounce the words that cancel the irreparable, effacing it as fallen snow effaces the print of footsteps. That is why true forgiveness can proceed only from the divine part of us. All other forgiveness can only debase. This book is the story of such a reconstruction — or, to adopt a term from “*La Crise*,” of a wounded happiness. . . .

One evening last summer I was descending into a valley of Savoy. I always take with me to the mountains my dreams and stories, after real life has given me the material. They keep me company and find their own way to a *dénouement*. Sometimes I carry them to dizzy heights. That evening I was hastening to find shelter, for I was both hungry and tired.

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My eyes were soon gladdened by the sight of a roof; I quickened my steps and knocked at the door.

The man who opened it had about him that air of neglect which proceeds not from poverty, but from indifference; he had intrenched himself in a defeat which he had accepted, even sought for. His clothes were not worn out, but they hardly held together, they seemed never to have been brushed or mended. He was unshorn and his beard neglected. Yet his face was not unrefined.

He looked at me with sad eyes, not with hostility, indifferently. I told him of my weariness. It so happened that his supper was already on the shaky table: a more than frugal repast of bread and goat's milk cheese. And I was longing for some good hot soup, that had been long simmering by the fire! But there was no fire. He invited me to share what he had, adding:

"There is nothing here now. It is no longer a home."

It was my own opinion. But in politeness to my host, I protested:

"What more is needed?"

"What more is needed? — A fire, surely."

"Why don't you light one then?"

"I come in too late from work."

"Have you no wife, then?"

"I did have one. I have none, now."

"She is dead?"

"No."

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This "no" closed the conversation. After a silence, he arose and wished me farewell:

"Farther down there are real homes, where you will be more comfortable."

I left, and farther down, I did see a thatched roof, a real home, as the poor fellow had said, a roof from which came a spiral of smoke. I entered and found quite a little company: husband, wife and children, around a brazier of clear fire over which a black pot, suspended from an iron crane, was licked by red flames. At once they invited me to join them, after the fashion of old Savoy. Amused and enlivened by the laughter of the little tots, I asked about the solitary man living not far above them. They told me his wife had gone off with a smuggler. One day she returned, but he refused to take her back. So she went back to her native country and no one had heard anything more of her.

"Back to her native country?"

"To Italy. She was not a woman of these parts. . . ."

Thus I learned that a house is no longer a home without its cockade of smoke. Did they not in olden time count the inhabitants of a village by the number of fires? Each fire is a family.

If art does not become interested in the hearth-fire it will soon leave reality behind, will fall into portraying the false and romanesque. In large cities the houses are too high, the spirals of smoke are lost in the fogs that obscure the sky, and ideas

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as well. In the country, at eventide, it is easier to count them. . . .

After Balzac, you, my dear master and friend, have shown the family as the true social unit. In reading this book which I dedicate to you, may you taste that satisfaction with which one who loves the warmth of life sees the rekindling of a half-extinct flame.

HENRY BORDEAUX.

Paris, January 10, 1912.

BOOK I
THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

FOOTPRINTS BENEATH THE SNOW

I

FRANQUEVILLE STREET, which joins the Avenue Henri-Martin at the edge of the Bois de Boulogne, crosses that Park of La Muette which was once one of the gems of Paris, and which, even in its reduced proportions, still remains, with its green-swards which rival the Ranelagh gardens of Marie-Antoinette, its deeply shaded walks with their far glimpses of the ancient meet of the royal hunt, a miniature replica of Chantilly or Versailles. It borders the new ivy-draped wall, and has houses only on one side, broadening out here and there into open spaces, like a river not yet hemmed in by embankments,—wide fields where ancient trees, relics of the beauty of former days, though doomed to death, enjoy their last days of sunshine.

Most of the houses along the street are of modern construction and have alike upon their fronts the inscription, *Mark Romenay, Architect.*

Among those who knew the attractions of this re-

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tired spot, Mark Romenay had made a name for himself in architecture. At a time when architecture, making a great show of freeing itself from the slow influences of the past, of being individual, as is the fashion of the day, has yet been compelled to fall back upon the older forms or sacrifice its very existence as an art, Mark Romenay had the ingenuity to adapt to modern requirements the charmingly decorative style of Louis XVI, embellishing it with balustrades and window boxes, opening it up to admit light and air, giving to small dimensions the illusion of space, and adapting them generally to furnishings in light English woods, dainty imitations of Chippendale and Adam: in other words of suiting his houses to the requirements of men and women who shrink alike from seclusion and from external ugliness, and abhor equally that which wounds the sensibilities and that which compels to reflection. It is a condition of mind which curiously relates the present age to the reckless eve of the Revolution, of which a historian has said that it surrounded the elegances of its last moments with the perfume of dying roses.

The stroller who should venture into Franqueville Street, a place usually so quiet that he might fancy himself its discoverer, could hardly fail to observe a villa two stories in height, with a small garden half hiding its unobtrusive front. The straight, pure lines of the main building, the terraced roof, were no doubt suggested by the "Little Trianon," but they were so overlaid with ornament and futile

additions that one lost sight of the model; there were indeed so many bays and windows that one might wonder how the walls could maintain their equilibrium. Mark Romenay had reserved this habitation for himself, and he never entered it without an expression of pleasure lighting up his sad eyes. His personal tragedy had made small impression upon his disposition or his features, both naturally grave and in marked contrast always with his social surroundings, and with the requirements of an art more concerned to adapt itself to society than to home life.

On this warm day in July he even paused to consider his dwelling more attentively. Was it not the prettiest picture in the world?—The declining sun caressed so warmly the white tones of the villa, still too harsh and new, now rose-coloured in the quivering light. At the foot of the steps the miniature parterre, covered with flame-coloured canna-blooms, resembled a festival bouquet, offered to whom?—Surely to a little girl crowned with golden curls who laughed and called to him from a balcony above the garden, clapping her little hands in the sunlight, and crying:

“Good afternoon, Papa!”

What sight can be more charmingly welcome and restful after the day's work than that of one's own child playing on the balcony of one's own house, and that house built and arranged according to one's own ideas of home? What more ennobling, and full

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of creature joy? Only one thing more was needed to give perfection,— the profile of the young mother half revealed behind the open window. Some one was indeed there now, but it was only the old governess.

Mark Romenay answered the pretty welcome of the child with a wave of his hand, but without smiling; he had always been very reserved. Yet the mere sight of his little Juliette rested him, as a drop of cold water relieves the moment's thirst.

He was hastening up the steps to join her when a servant handed him his mail, with the remark:

"There is a telegram also. It came some time ago."

The architect took the packet of letters with indifference. There was no one he expected to hear from, and there was plenty of time to attend to any business in his working hours. He went on to Juliette, who was prancing with delight at the head of the stairs. He took her up lightly at arms' length, and lifted her through the open door into the room which served as her school room.

"Well, Madame Acher," he said as he entered with his precious burden, "are you satisfied with her?"

"Mademoiselle," replied the governess, "simply lives on this balcony; I can hardly make her attend to anything."

Mark Romenay looked sternly at his daughter as if to reprove her, but glancing round the room he understood better and hesitated. Even from within one had a feeling of being out of doors. La Muette

park quietly took possession of the entire room by way of the great window which occupied one whole side of it, and a large mirror repeated the impression. The light table and chairs, thus surrounded by the green of the park, seemed as if arranged in a garden for an out-of-door repast. The idea of bending over lessons and copybooks in such a place!

"It is hardly necessary to go out on the balcony," he remarked with an air of resignation.

And then he asked, almost maternally:

"Have you had your little lunch?"

"Yes, Papa."

"She ate only half of her muffin," explained good-hearted Madame Acher, always much concerned about her pupil.

Mark was disturbed by the child's loss of appetite, which he felt to be much more serious than the small attention to lessons of which the governess had complained.

"Listen," he said to the child, "learn your lesson quickly, and we will take a walk together."

But the idle child was not to be taken in by fine promises.

"Oh!" she said with a little grimace of doubt. "You always say that, and when I am all ready, I have to hunt for papa, for papa is not to be found; he forgets to come for me."

"This evening I will surely go. We are having long days now and we can go as far as the ponds, and then you will be hungry for your dinner."

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“Truly? truly? truly?” exclaimed the child in her shrill staccato. “Now then, Madame, quick, we will have the names of the capital cities.”

And with the words Berlin, Saint Petersburg, Vienna, sounding in his ears, Mark Romenay left the room for his own study, not without a consciousness of failure to live up to his paternal responsibilities. How often it was thus! He would come home, his mind full of plans for the child, and when the time came for carrying them out, other cares would have crowded them out. He had believed that he could replace the *absent one* and yet, like most fathers, he had rested satisfied with good intentions. This time he resolved that everything must give way before the promised walk with his little daughter. Nothing could be of more importance, nothing else could take its place in his heart and mind; and hastily, the sooner to get through with them, he went at the pile of letters on his desk, already heaped up with models and plans,—and tore off the flap of the telegram, which no doubt was to remind him of a business meeting, or to arrange for one. He had not the least suspicion of its contents, he believed his heart to be cold and dead; but by the shock it gave him he recognised his mistake. The blue paper contained two lines that his eye took in at a glance:

Madame Romenay dying Hospice Grand Saint Bernard desires speak with you: if consent see her again, come immediately time presses. Then fol-

lowed the signature of one unknown: *Dornaz, Prior.*

With a strange authority, insidiously, inevitably, grief took possession of him, in spite of him, pulsed through his veins, invaded his brain. Yet his first impulse was one of revolt against this power which laid its strong hand upon him. What had he to do with the tragedy that was coming to its close so far away? With what right did his wife come back into his life after he had driven her from it? She might well die, since she had been untrue to him.

Yet even now he felt this false front of pride and indifference breaking down before the all powerful thought,—the certainty of death. Three times it had been emphasized with a persistence that left no doubt:

Madame Romenay dying . . . come immediately . . . time presses. . . .

He looked at the despatch for the hour of its departure: eleven o'clock. She had been dying since morning. Could she survive till sunset? Would strength be given to her to live till the morrow, or even the day after? How much time would be required for the journey that they demanded of him? Mechanically, to drive away unbearable thoughts, to evade an immediate decision, he took from the book-case (this promised nothing) a guide-book of Switzerland, the same book that he had looked over with *her*, a little over a year ago, when they were

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planning a vacation trip to the mountains. The mountains! It was then that she had fallen in love with them. Once free to indulge this passion she must have given way with a boldness, a delight in danger, which takes possession of those whose uneventful life is broken up. This overwhelming misfortune that had laid her low at the Grand Saint Bernard could be nothing less than an accident. Doubtless she had been found in the snow, half dead. Yes, that must have been it. But surely she was not alone? The *other one* must also have been there. No, no, he could not, he ought not to go to her now.

Baedeker instructed him as to the distance: In order to reach the hospice one must leave the Simplon Line at Martigny and take a carriage for a long day's drive — nearly fifty kilometres, and two thousand metres of ascent. He opened the great Indicator. The Simplon Express left at eight o'clock in the evening, reached Lausanne at six the following morning and Martigny an hour later. A whole day between them, if he yielded to her last appeal and consented to see her again. To see her again! What good would it do, and why should he? For the third time he re-read the telegram. Surely he could hardly arrive in time.

And if he did go after all? You can never be sure how long an ebbing life may last. You draw back, you hesitate, you pause when Death is surely there, the one irreparable thing. What was expected of him, if not a word of peace, of pardon? Could he

refuse it to a dying woman who had such need of it before annihilation — or the mysterious passage beyond? That was in fact only what the past demanded of him. However just his resentment, could he refuse this without needless cruelty? Are not such last reconciliations meaningless? And if so, how could he refuse to perform his part in a funeral ceremony which was of no real significance and required only a little pity? Thus little by little a new decision, seemingly outside of his will, began to take possession of him.

Under the dominance of this feeling he mechanically composed his reply to the telegram: *Prior Dornaz, Hospice Grand Saint Bernard. Will arrive to-morrow night. Inform the invalid. Romanay.*

Should he send it? He was not quite sure. He was tempted to add a few words which would make evident that this was but conventional magnanimity, but he dreaded intermediaries. Above all things, let no one else be mixed up in this conjugal tragedy. Mark hastily summoned the servant to receive orders which he hardly yet felt sure of giving — which yet the appearance of the servant seemed to oblige him to give: to send the telegram, to pack his valise, with warm clothing because of the altitude, to advance the dinner an hour, to bid the chauffeur have the automobile ready.

Thus, everything being in readiness for his departure, he was relieved of those material cares which

in a time of catastrophe keep us steady and allow the shaken spirit to grow calm, to get accustomed to misfortune and submissive to it. His decision surprised him as if he had not had to make it. Weary with the conflict he gave himself up to memory, which brought back former days. Was he afraid of his recollections? He started up, attempted to walk, and was surprised to find himself tottering as if he had been wounded. Had the moral shock been so heavy that he felt the blow physically? Unnerved, troubled by the loss of his habitual self-possession, Mark left his study, hardly knowing where he was going. On the landing he heard a clear little voice rapidly repeating a string of names: "Spain, capital Madrid; Portugal, capital Lisbon"; — Juliette, impetuously throwing herself into her lesson, was crossing Europe at a gallop. Shortly, in a few moments, she would come to claim her reward — and her mother was dying. But for her, the child, was not the mother already dead?

Thérèse was dying: the two words began to reverberate in his ears like the tolling of the passing bell. He took refuge from the sound in a room that had been hermetically closed, and drew up the shades. It was his wife's room, a room laquered, polished, varnished, a whole side open to receive the light, furnished with a refined taste that made the most of the farthest corner for ornamentation, till no space was left for one's own fancies, for tenderness, for intimacy; one of those light, luxurious, meaningless

rooms where nothing can be changed, and which bear no impress of personality, of the presence of one dear: rooms for show, for gaiety, for pleasure, rooms in which there is no place for meditation, for quiet thought, for dreams or for grief. The room seemed to be waking from a long slumber under the level rays of the declining sun, that found their way between the branches of the trees. Solitude seemed to have thrown across the street a bridge joining the windows to the park of La Muette. What had brought Mark Romenay here if not the past, the past to which death would soon affix the seal?

How pretty and new and harmonious it all was! Why should so much charm give him a sense of injury? was it not he himself who before and in view of his marriage had built this house, selected its furniture, adapted each thing to its place with painstaking art? He remembered how, on the return from their wedding journey, when he had led his young wife into the apartment which he had prepared for her with such fervent interest, expecting to enjoy her bewildered delight — for she had not been accustomed to such luxury, and he desired to enjoy to the full her pleased surprise — she had said with a little air of satisfaction, and he still heard the slightly singing tone of her voice:

“Oh, it is too beautiful! You will spoil me.” And yet, a few moments later, when she had been all around the room and had exclaimed with delight over all its conveniences and beauties, she had suddenly

stopped in her proprietary rounds to ask timidly: "Then nothing can be changed in here?"

Instead of smiling at her innocent remark he had taken it for a reproach. Yet did not this little criticism, ventured with such sweet gentleness, precisely meet the case? He had thought of everything, except of leaving to his young wife the pleasure of arranging things according to her own taste.

One morning she had stopped to speak to a beggar-woman, instead of merely giving alms. Their singular dialogue came back to him word for word.

"I am glad to see you," said Thérèse; "it is a long time since I have seen any of you."

"Any of who?"

"Poor people. They hardly ever come around here."

"I will come again, Madame, you are very kind. It's pretty,—your house!"

"Would you like to see it?"

"Oh, no!"

"Come in and see it."

And Thérèse had showed the poor old woman over the house, bidding her good-bye with the words,

"Do you know? Sometimes I long to be poor myself."

The beggar had laughed. It was only one of the funny things rich ladies say, that amuse beggars, without hurting their feelings. It pays better not to be insolent. But why, when the beggar laughed, did Thérèse become thoughtful? She had lightly ac-

cepted the advantages of fortune, but in her heart she cared little for them. When she lost them, for she had lost at least a good part of them, it could not have seemed to her that she had lost anything she really valued.

Why did Mark recall little scenes like these which did not lessen her in his esteem, why did he find in these memories a sort of tender distress? After the break between them, looking backward, as he often did in spite of himself, he would rather have known her dead. Now that she was dying — dead perhaps — he asked himself if the pain of knowing her to be alive did not in all its cruelty awake in him some secret tenderness.

Did he love her still? He put from him the importunate question — whether he did or not, he was not one of those cowards whose hearts impel them to a base weakness. Since circumstances required this last-hour compassion he would act his part in the comedy of pardon; he would climb the Saint Bernard carrying this viaticum. Never but for this would he have consented to see her again. Never, never . . . and even this journey —

See her again? In a few hours he would see her again. This was the pivot around which he was revolving, drawn to it by a thousand ties that were tightening little by little. Instinctively he sought a photograph, a portrait. There was none in her room, there was none anywhere in the house. When we hang on the walls the mementos of our happy

days we believe that happiness is our right because it was ours. It has existed. Nothing can ravish it from our grasp. Yet even our past is not secure: it is always dependent upon something. We cannot be sure of having been happy in the past unless we are happy still. And the sharpest pang of betrayal is not the present wrong but the blow it deals to the past, reducing it to a heap of ruins.

The face that he sought and yet dreaded to see, did he not daily find it in Juliette? To begin with, her hair,—fine and fluffy, though lighter in shade than her mother's. Oh, Thérèse's lovely hair, so soft, so alive, so hard to gather into a twist, with the ruddy colour of half-ripe chestnuts where they begin to turn brown! . . . And then her eyes, those brown eyes that some blond women have, at once coaxing and deep, with the wild sweetness of ponds hidden in the woods when the sun touches them. The child's face had a longer oval, a firmer chin than her mother's, stronger features that came from him. But why this comparison? And here the image of the faithless one, unfortunately recalled, became more distinct, larger, like a figure which, first seen at the end of an avenue, grows larger as one approaches it.

To shake off the thought of her he left the room, so alive with her presence that the mirrors reflecting the sunlight seemed as if they might yet reflect her image. Returning to his study, he took from a locked drawer a packet of crumpled letters. With

thought, you cannot know, the horror of having no child, no husband, no home, nothing,—and to lose them all at once. I have no fire, and I am cold, I'm hungry, I'm afraid, the whole dark night has fallen upon me. I call Juliette in my heart, and she cannot hear me call. If you no longer love me, have pity, as one pities the poor. If you love me still hark to my tears. For the sake of my suffering and my deep repentance, forgive me!

“I accepted your severe reproaches with bowed head. I denied nothing, and it was even a comfort that I need lie no more. It always hurt me so to deceive you. But oh, do not believe me so very guilty! In these eight years of married life, have you so little learned to know me as to believe me so base, so perfidious? I cannot bear the shame of it! Ah, understand me better, I implore you! Indeed, you must! No one has the right to condemn another thus. How other women are I do not know; no doubt they know better than I how to choose the good or the evil. But I—I am all weakness, and not the same every day, not the same in winter as in spring. I never meant to be false to you, I swear it on our daughter, and you may believe me. One does wrong without realising it, and because one is oneself deceived. I needed to be protected and sheltered, and you did not take the trouble to realise it. You were absorbed in your business, and I—I was there alone. Oh! I am not turning against you. I know my fault only too well. You had given me

everything and I had little to give in return,— nothing but my warm heart that you had only half taken. I was without fortune and without a secure future, and you made me your wife. It was beautiful. It was too beautiful, and no doubt the devotion of a whole life was not too much to prove my gratitude. I had given you my love, and you, too — remember — you loved me. Only your affection was not the same thing. I think I had pleased you, because I was a little untamed creature, very different from the Parisian women you had known. But you did not spend much time in taming me — not enough, perhaps. You were always so busy, so hurried. So there were parts of me that you never explored. Perhaps, indeed, they were not worth the trouble. I do not say this to excuse myself, but to explain myself to you, do you see? And then I was not used to the ways of the Paris world. In Paris a woman is not protected, she is not upheld. God seems so far away that one cannot think of Him. One is bewildered by all that one sees and hears. Nothing seems to be forbidden. Books, theatres, everything say the same thing, and the women we used to see did just as they liked, without the least disturbance of their calm. One has no time to think, and even if one does think, it is only of love. Love alone could hold one back, in a life that rushes on like a train, so that one cannot stop a moment, not even to admire some beautiful thing or to say a prayer,— which is a comfort when one has too tender a heart, like mine.

The thing was done before I knew it, I swear to you. He came to me in all true friendship. Last summer when we were all at the Riffelalp, we experienced together the dangers of the high mountains. That brings people nearer each other than you realise. And more than all, he was unhappy. You, you are so strong, you go straight ahead. It never seemed to me that my love added much to your orderly and busy life. He assured me that it was everything to him. Ah! I acknowledge that I ought to have told you all this, but one dares not talk about such things, especially when you are not sure whether you really do love or not, and you think that nothing serious will come of it. But something did come, and I found no joy in it; I loved him in terror. Now if you will, it shall be ended — ended forever. He will understand, he will go far away. Take me back, Mark, forgive me; I will take up no place in your home, I will devote myself entirely to Juliette, you shall hardly know that I am there, and only when you wish to. My dear, my friend,—I beg of you, remember our past love; be kind, be generous, open the door to me to-morrow when I go back home. It seems such a long time since I kissed my little girl. And now, I can bear no more, have pity, have pity on your wife,

“THÉRÈSE.”

This letter had remained unanswered though he had no doubt of its sincerity — what would be the

good? He had never been able to read it since without a feeling of disgust at the false compassion that it still awoke within him; and how could he reply without taking up one by one its feeble appeals to sentiment? Yes, Thérèse, he admitted, was innocent of perfidy or baseness; why accuse her uselessly? Was it not bad enough when he was just to her? Did she deny her guilty love? She offered to give it up because of maternal tenderness,—that she might resume her place in her home — from a spirit of submission, from a thirst for peace, but she did not realise her great offence, she showed no true remorse. And how was he to believe in this imperative passion, the too easy excuse for all sorts of self-indulgence, for the domination of sensual impulses? Such impulses never come without warning, they do not at once appear in their full power; there is always a time when one can put them aside, if only by fleeing from them. Why had not Thérèse had the courage to confide in him? Even without confidences, without romantic scenes, does not a wife know how to occupy a little more of her husband's care and attention, especially when the husband is one from whom she has received only proofs of kindness, whom she has no cause to reproach except for seriousness and absorption in business, when lack of occupation is the direct cause of so many divisions and infidelities? And why did she remind him, with so little delicacy, of the disparity in their fortunes, which he had never made her feel?

She had ceased to love him and so she discovered imaginary causes of complaint. She had ceased to love him; what could he do about that? If she had cause to complain of him, why had she not complained before? If she loved her little daughter so much, why did she not find in maternal affection a refuge from the struggle against an unworthy love? To allow himself to be touched, to give in to her pleading, to consent to an impossible forgiveness — a more impossible promise to forget, — would have been the most deplorable weakness. Doubtless many disunited households do take up again the mutual chain, but they transform the marriage tie into an association of business interests, with no common fund but self-contempt in self-indulgence. He had refused to lower himself to such a degree, to consent to such degradation. The thought of his little girl had for a moment only disturbed his firm conviction of being in the right. That first evening, that tragic evening, she had called for her mamma with such persistence — her mamma from whom she had never before been separated! How could he let her be half orphaned? Ought he to submit possession of her to the courts like a property that may be divided? Then his memory pictured Thérèse returning from her guilty absences, caressing the child, with her lying lips still moist with strange kisses.

Thus he had refused to receive her back. Two days later he had fought a duel with her lover,

André Norans, had wounded him severely in the side with a sword thrust. At first, it was thought that his life was in danger, but the wound healed well, and sooner than was expected.

André Norans was also a married man, and on the eve of the duel which caused such a scandal he had left his home and broken with his wife. He was carried, wounded, to a furnished apartment which he had hastily hired, whither he was followed and nursed by Thérèse, who, believing him to be dying, would not abandon him. From thence she had sent a second letter which Mark Romenay now read over.

“ This unhappy duel has raised an insuperable barrier between us. They brought him back dying. He was alone, he kept calling for me. How could I refuse to go to him? I did not stop to reflect, I ran to him. If you had been wounded, would I not even have forced your door? Whatever might be the result, I was torn in two. Yet I had first offered to return to you, with repentance and with my whole heart. But you threw me out as if I had been a dog, and you tried to revenge your wrongs upon another. Ah! all my powers of love have now become powers for suffering. I have not a thought, no part of me, that is not one pain. . . .

He will live, but his death, if you had succeeded in killing him, would not have separated us more than his life. Now I can never return into your life. You will demand a divorce and it will be granted, I

shall not defend myself. What would be the use? What could I say? And you will keep Juliette. Perhaps I might be allowed to see her from time to time. I have been a good mother, I have nothing to reproach myself with in that respect. But later she will not understand why we do not live together, and after that she will understand too much. I had thought of demanding her of you, snatching her away from you; but I am so afraid of doing her harm. I have never wished to harm any one. I did not see the abyss into which I was falling. I am not strong enough to carry on a lawsuit in a court of justice. And when I have wept my tears out, I see before me a frightful thing; but even that is better than to fight over the possession of our child. I do not want my fault to fall back upon her head. Keep her entirely, care for her well, since with me she would always be measured by me, while with you she will not be measured. Your mother, who seemed to be a little fond of me, will help you to bring her up. Do not forget that Juliette has a delicate throat, and that she must be well wrapped up when she goes out, and let her keep on a few of her wrappings when she first comes in, that she may not have a chill. Oh! never to feel her warm little cheek, never to see her trustful eyes, never to hear her sweet voice, her little sayings! It is torture much worse than death! And yet, you see, I make this sacrifice to you, I do it because it seems to me better for her. She is so sensitive, and so precocious, that our enmities would crush her. Promise

me to keep her memory of me alive, do not wrench her heart away from me, from me who will always be far away. You owe me this much, for my heart is torn in shreds. You do not, you cannot, know what a mother's heart is, if you think anything in the world can fill the place of her child. Farewell, farewell, I shall not read this over, for I fear I should not send it if I did. I believe I am doing right to send it. God will forgive me, seeing me so unhappy, and as for you, may you never regret what you have done with me. . . .

“THÉRÈSE.”

To this letter, the tone of which, in spite of himself, had touched him more deeply than he allowed to himself, he had replied by a few words in the third person. He had confided his trouble to no one. He approved of his wife's wish to spare Juliette the sorrow of parting and promised in return to watch carefully over the child, to keep alive her memory of her mother. He even promised that news of her should be sent each month through the governess. What more could he do? He had ordered his lawyer to make suitable pecuniary arrangements for Madame Romenay, but she had refused all aid. Finally, in the divorce proceedings which he instituted a little later, he had simply pleaded as cause the article of “grave wrongs.” There had been no response to the summons and he was now awaiting, from day to day, the official decision in his favour.

Thus, before setting out, he lived over that past from which he had believed himself freed. He was cut short in these reflections by the entrance of little Juliette, with her skipping step like a little wagtail in the field. She darted to him across the room; her long curls waved her large straw hat as she held out her tiny gloved hands:

"Here I am, all ready, Papa;" then realising from his surprised look that he had entirely forgotten his promise, an expression of disappointment overshadowed her face, and in a tone of regret she exclaimed:

"Oh, I might have known! You won't go out with me after all! It is always so!"

Her father looked at her so fixedly, as she stood there before him, hardly knee high, like a little pot of flowers, scarcely reaching to the level of the table, that she began to feel embarrassed, and half afraid. At the least emotion her cheeks would crimson to her ears. This too sensitive nature, so easily moved, was one of her mother's charms, which the familiar intercourse of married life had not lessened. After a long silence, through which Thérèse's plaintive voice seemed to echo, Mark said at last.

"Yes, I will take you with me."

"Where shall we go?"

"A long way off. To Switzerland."

The child clapped her hands; an idea came to her which she did not express. The childish imagination transposes truth without falsifying it, as legend

restores history in its own fashion, which is none the less true.

“Run and call Madame Acher; we start in an hour.”

Poor Madame Acher, with arms uplifted, had hardly heard of this suddenly improvised journey, which was a mystery to her, but of which she was to be a party — how crazy to start thus at a moment’s notice for the Grand Saint Bernard! — when the footman announced:

“Madame Romenay.”

Mark must have looked strangely, for the servant hastened to add, “Master’s mother.”

Madame Romenay, his mother, was a woman such as is rarely seen in these days, one who has consented to grow old. Under her white hair, in spite of the melancholy expression at the depressed corners of her mouth, her eyes, which a life of practical piety had softened, gave to her features an expression akin to the peace of eventide. She must have been beautiful in her prime, for there still remained that unconscious dignity of carriage which the possession of beauty adds to its other gifts. After her son’s marriage she had withdrawn from active participation in his life from a feeling of delicacy, and also because she was fond of solitude; but after the break between him and his wife she had quietly reappeared. Of Thérèse she had spoken only words of pity and indulgence, somewhat unexpected from one of such rigid virtue. Mark, feeling that she did not

approve of his stern attitude, sadly attributed her sympathy with the erring one to the depressing influence of advancing years.

He held out the telegram. She was deeply moved by it.

“You are going?”

“In a few minutes.”

“You are quite right.”

As she came up the stairs she had seen through the open door the hurry of preparation; the governess and the chambermaid, all consternation and confusion, hastily packing a trunk.

“Are you taking Juliette?” the mother asked timidly.

He assented apologetically:

“Yes, perhaps I am wrong. What shall I do with her up there? And if . . . if the *other one* is there. . . .”

He was already repenting his decision, and about to give contrary orders. With persuasive charity his mother stopped him:

“Since she is dying — she will more easily believe in your sincerity if Juliette is with you. . . .”

To take Juliette with him meant forgiveness. He had already granted it from afar, without even being aware of it. But to save his dignity, he repeated:

“Since she is dying. . . .”

II

Juliette trotted along the railway platform at Madame Acher's side, calling from time to time, "Papa," her shrill childish voice lost in the noise. She could not keep up with Romenay's rapid steps, hurrying toward the Paris-Milan sleeper, in the wake of a luggage-laden porter. Turning back, Romenay signed them to wait while he booked their compartment.

In the passage he met a tall, dark young woman in a travelling cloak. As he drew back to let her pass, they exchanged a careless glance, and he felt a cold chill as her countenance changed. Summoning his presence of mind, he turned into an empty compartment. The lady had turned as if to speak to him, but he had disappeared. When he came out to seek his daughter and her governess she was no longer there.

The train started. Before installing himself in a place near them, Mark Romenay gave his instructions to Madame Acher. The child could sleep all night: they would not reach Martigny until morning, and it would be soon enough to awaken her at Lausanne or even as late as Montreux. But Juliette, excited

by this mysterious journey, had no wish to sleep. There was time enough for that, for out of doors it was still light. All sorts of questions tumbled from her lips. Even her eyes seemed full of interrogations that her lips did not know how to frame. Where were they going, anyhow? Why had Papa so suddenly decided to go? And this Grand Saint Bernard Mountain; was it a very high place, and hard to climb?

Mark Romenay, who usually enjoyed her chatter, lent a careless ear, replying in monosyllables. At dinner where he had seated himself to make a semblance of eating, in the automobile which had carried them to the station, he had been absorbed and tactless. His sadness had never been stern. But now a new shadow darkened his features and hardened them.

To occupy the child's mind Madame Acher spoke of two pictures which she had seen in an album of Picturesque Switzerland; one of them represented a traveller, overcome by fatigue, lying in the snow, being rescued by two great dogs which licked his face to revive him, one of them having a little keg of wine hanging from his collar, the other a blanket strapped to his back. In the distant background the hospice could be perceived, and two monks hurrying to the rescue.

"What are the two dogs' names?" asked Juliette.

The second picture was of the First Consul crossing the Alps on the back of a white mule. He was

draped in a flowing mantle, his impenetrable face under a three-cornered hat, his firm hand loosely holding the bridle. He was dreaming, while the path led along the edge of the most frightful precipices. And the governess, warming to the heroic, dwelt with pride on this romantic picture, describing with delight the small beautiful hand,—so careless and yet so firm. Napoleon and the Saint Bernard dogs,—here was enough to inflame the child's imagination; she begged for more stories about them and would not go to sleep. The Grand Saint Bernard seemed like the ascent into a fairy tale, and surely wonderful things must happen there. There was no knowing what she was to find there.

“You must go to sleep,” commanded her father.

“Oh, not yet! the sky is still red.”

The slowly declining sun turned the western sky to copper-colour. It was a fine summer evening, soft and lingering. Mark Romenay, unyielding, closed the curtains. Light came only from the small lamp in the ceiling. Juliette tried to struggle against the drowsiness that weighed down her eyelids. Once or twice she murmured the names of Barry and Lion, which Madame Acher had given at a guess to the canine saviours of the mountain. Then vanquished at last, Juliette kissed her father and let the governess put her to bed.

Mark wished them good night and went to his own section, which by chance he had all to himself. Daylight was still there. In July the days are so long.

However, the light of the setting sun began to fade little by little, as if to make one forget its presence, while still remaining. Its paling rays, almost horizontal, became dimmed like a fire burned down to the ground and almost extinct. Before the train reached the Forest of Fontainebleau, it already had to confess itself defeated. The trees near the railway could still be perceived, but in confused masses, rather than distinct forms; no breath of air disturbed them. The train plunged into the still darkness of the woods, to which was now added that of night. At intervals the strident whistle of the locomotive tore through the shadows, like the shrill cry of peacocks in a park, seeming to presage a misfortune.

The air penetrating the open portière cooled his forehead. He had tried not to think,—to let himself go. But in the regular rhythm of the train he heard, like a refrain, distinct words that seemed to scan: *She is dead*; — a continuous refrain, insistently recurring with each turn of the wheels and that brayed his brain as in a mortar. With a strange revulsion of feeling he felt irritation rather than pain, and he blamed himself for having yielded to sympathy in undertaking to bring a useless pardon. All this for no reason except that he had shortly before met in the corridor a woman closely connected with his life's tragedy, Madame Norans.

He had not seen her since the day when, six months before, she had come like a mad woman, in

all her unbridled jealousy, to Franqueville Street; had insisted on seeing him, on seeing him alone, had glided like a venomous serpent into his study, and defiantly gazing into his eyes, her own blazing with hate and malediction, without fear of what might ensue, had informed him that they had both been basely deceived, that Thérèse Romenay was the mistress of André Norans. How haughtily he had refused to believe her! He was the guardian of his hearth; he would allow no intruder. Let her spare him these lies and calumnies! He would hear none of her proofs. Surprised at this reception, Madame Norans had drawn back, her head lowered and her mouth full of biting words, like a dog driven out yet still trying to bite. Thus he had led her to his door. But after she was gone, suddenly struck to the heart by an atrocious suspicion, by certain incidents which came into his mind, he had gone, distrustful, to his absent wife's room, forced the lock of her desk, and discovered letters which permitted him no longer to doubt. Then he had sent away the servants and watched for the wretched woman's return, in order to cast her off.

Madame Norans had wilfully unchained the vengeance which must fall back upon herself.

The two lovers, the two fugitives, at this moment dying or dead, had doubtless been struck down together, since that woman was here, in the same train, like himself a prey to memories of the past, she too summoned to a death-bed meeting. With

increasing certainty he saw all the details of an accident on the mountains: the searchers had found them in the same crevasse or on the same glacier. Kindly fate still united them. Their love would never know all the tragedy of love, its sad decline, the indifference of custom, the weariness of satiety, degrading jealousy, the fear of infidelity. It would end without decreasing,— and Mark Romenay, envying them, began again to abhor them.

Was it that he might contemplate their beautiful, their triumphant death that he had been summoned? Why had Thérèse insisted on his being called to her death-bed? Was not the presence of her lover at that last moment enough for her? This commiseration that the menace of a fatal end had stirred in his heart was only weakness, and the presence of Madame Norans, the similarity of their positions, emphasised all that was odious and grotesque in the situation.

She also was hastening, called by a telegram apparently as imperative and mysterious as that which had summoned him; near him, on the other side of a thin partition, she was suffering. But their identical sufferings did not, could not, mingle. It was enough for him to feel her there so near to harden him against his trouble, for his trouble was still his love.

Restless, he went out into the corridor, first at haphazard, then seeking Madame Norans, not daring to open the doors, not wishing to question the

unhappy woman, yet anxious to be near her because she knew something. He no longer reasoned with his inconsistencies. Feverish and weary, he returned to his seat, sent away the porter who would have made up his berth, lowered the light, and in the darkness left sorrow free to master thought. For a few moments his thoughts wandered like birds seeking their way; then choosing their direction, they settled down upon his past. Alighting there as upon a bark they floated along the tide of the years. And just because they went further back than his memories of Thérèse, he believed that he was freeing himself from those memories.

In times of serious moment, our life's story seems spontaneously to pass before us as a whole, as if to assume its true significance when it is about either to go under or shine out triumphant. We fly back to childhood's memories as to a refuge, then to our loves and friendships to know our own heart, and measure our ills or our joys. In this night's vigil Mark could cast up the account of his fortunes and find no happiness there. Had destiny showered favours on him only to refuse him the gift of enjoying them, like the legendary latest-arrived fairy, whose gift annulled those of all who had preceded her?

When quite a little fellow he had borne the burden of wealth and pleasure after the manner of those royal infants of Velasquez' portraits, crushed under the load of heavy laces, and who, bedizened with gold chains and precious stones, would have enjoyed play-

ing about if only they could have dragged themselves around under their rich apparel. In that villa in the Avenue de Friedland it was the continual coming and going of receptions and parties. He used to watch the preparations, and then they would tuck him away, in housekeeper's or steward's quarters, unless they dressed him up to be exhibited, as something to be shown off. His father, Philibert Romenay, the celebrated architect, the large builder of casinos, concert halls, theatres, railway stations, the accomplished constructor of those great halls and bazars through which streams contemporary life, had always been hungry for publicity, luxury and movement, adoring excitement, noise, tumult, gaiety, decorations, disguises. "All Paris" passed through his home, with its artificiality and its prestige. But, while the mirror of remembrance brought back to Mark a distinct picture of the wonderful father, always dapper, happy, with laughing mouth and sparkling eyes, with carefully tended blond beard, two absolutely distinct reflections of his mother would come between.

Never before having observed this difference, he was surprised at his discovery, and leaned forward curiously to get a better view.

There she was in the mirror, coming towards the child, dressed for the evening; she was like a pastel whose colours turn to dust and fall and are faded by time. But even half effaced, and so far away, ah, dear God! what a sweet mother she was! If only

he dared to touch her! She bends towards him smiling, and he wants to kiss her; she puts him back gently; he guesses that she must be careful of her fine colouring, for she is powdered and her lips are too red to be natural. He knows that she is something fragile and fragrant, something to which one must not come too near: he is very awkward, and so, not to frighten this beautiful creature, of his own accord he puts his hands behind his back.

At other times she takes possession of him passionately; she even breaks in upon his boyish habits, — and then again he feels himself forgotten. Already the child begins to perceive how complicated is life, and one day — when was it? — a long time after? or soon? — in vain he searches his memory, it refuses to respond — everything is changed. He finds that he is first, above everything else, to his mother, and after a few hesitations he finds this affection quite natural. In fact has anything been really changed? There is the same hubbub in the house, and for him the same flight before the invasion of strange guests. Madame Romenay, dressed up, receives, talks, smiles, as before, no, he must be mistaken: the reflections in memory's mirror are confused. But if the reflections are confused it must be that the blurred mirror is becoming worn. His mother is present as a spectator, she no longer plays a part. Her sole part, now, is that of mother to himself.

Of the mysterious drama that he is not even sure

of having touched ever so lightly, whose dimly perceived threads are now broken, after which his mother continues to live, apparently the same, but in reality transformed,—an experience of his youth gave him the key. A woman whom he met on his first entrance into society had made his youthful senses thrill with desire. No doubt she was much older than he, but she had such rare and seductive gifts! Her gestures, her words, marvellously disciplined, sang after the manner of worn-out tenors who hide by cultivation the breaking of their voice. She had the perfection of a choice work of art. Was it not she whose cajoleries attracted him, whose glances set him on fire, who gave herself, even when she seemed to refuse, negligently arranging for meetings which he was never quite sure she would keep? He could not believe that a first mistress could be at once so magnificent and so artificial. He would have asked more from love—more desperation, more determination, a more noble exaltation. His very success inspired in him a vague fear. One so expert in pleasure rather appalled than dazzled him; and but a few weeks had passed when he learned the horrible truth that this woman had formerly been his father's; the caprice she felt for himself was only the wandering of a corrupt imagination. In a disgusted revulsion of feeling he overwhelmed her with his contempt. She did not attempt to deny, she made a boast of her audacity, she even dared to laugh insolently, with that shamelessness which in

such women increases from one false connection to another, and which at last brings them to find quite natural the infamous conduct which they exalt as the worship of passion. Then, his eyes suddenly opened, he saw in his once loved one only a sorceress possessed of evil charms. Now he saw her paint, realised her years, and knew the shame of loving. Yet though he had brushed her away from his life, had she not taken with her his guilelessness, the gay confidence of his youth, his ready credulity? Did he not owe to this cruel connection the disenchantment with which a first love without freshness overshadows a youthful heart?

Now with startling clearness he understood those paternal disorders, half perversity, half nervous excitement, which had resulted in the crisis, the incidents of which his childish memories had preserved. His mother had come in contact with the intractable selfishness of a man of pleasure, of one who always insists upon being spared all tears and complaints. She had drawn back within herself without explanations, but thenceforth she had lavished upon her neglected child all her wasted tenderness. Dear old mother! sad and pious, vanquished and self-forgetting, too much detached from life, bearing upon her features the imprint of a soft austerity refined by suffering, too saintly, one who having had the strength — or the weakness — of systematic forgiveness, would now persuade him to have mercy, forgetting, in her pity, the pride of man, the honour

of the hearth, her son's bleeding wound,— as if the comparison of her own immaculate sorrow did not add to Thérèse's guilt!

Mark Romenay, given over to his memories, motionless in a corner of his compartment, shook off his torpor. The chill of night came in by the still open portière. He did not close it — he needed air, but he unfolded his rugs. Here and there a clump of trees deepened the uniform darkness; the vivid, quivering light of stars overspread a sky from which the sunset light had faded, and over which that of early dawn had not yet begun to break. It was the short respite of night between twilight and morning, when the summer night blooms like a mysterious, invisible flower.

Only one year ago, from a seat on the Riffelalp, *she* had pointed out to him by name some of these constellations. Now he turned from them indifferently, after having involuntarily looked for Cygnus, which she used to like best. She? — He was almost surprised to find her still present in his thoughts. Had he not but now been reviewing all that part of his life in which she had had no share? But even to that past he had gone back only to come from it to his first meeting with her, as one searches for a presence at the end of an avenue.

What had made him choose her? His comfortable fortune, after the unexpected death of his father, his

rapid rise in his profession, a fine presence of which he could not but be aware, and even the air of disdain which he had kept from the first love-disillusionment, made him attractive to women and gave him the right to look forward to a most ambitious marriage. Like those unquiet souls who know neither how to give nor how to accept happiness, and who spread round about them an eternal unrest, he attracted sympathy without believing in it, he sought the gay world and detested it, he disdained flattery, but missed it when it was absent. A secret longing for a quiet home tormented him, as a traveller on a long, tempestuous voyage longs for a quiet harbour. But nowhere did he see the longed-for face. Furthermore, he doubted that he would ever find it. How could he entrust the order and peace of his home to any one of these young girls whose eyes have no reticences and whose manners rival in boldness those of the freest of women? It was perhaps possible that the simplicity of youth might be concealed under this appearance of worldly knowledge, that it even tended to make them the more audacious; and it would not be just to judge them without knowing them better. But so long as they offered nothing else in looks and conversation than that sort of attraction which is found in any commonplace love affair, it was impossible to think of them in the light of conjugal love. The very word has come to signify something hostile — and yet does it not add to

the usual charm the idea of duration, the desire to live on into the future, the dear consent to grow old together?

The most dangerous result of that modern revolution of ideas which the family has been called to undergo is the utter neglect of all that is most vital in an offer of marriage. The young girl shows it, if only by the light shining from her face, to the man who only wishes to find in her a continuation of his former love adventures. One heart, one flesh forever — who, now-a-days, understands the meaning of the sacred words? . . . Mark Romenay heard them echo in his heart with a sad, insulting irony. She whom he had chosen to share his life, the brilliant future which might satisfy any woman, did not belong to those social circles without foundation, without traditions, of which he had fully recognised the emptiness. She had brought as her dowry her wonder, her confidence, the sensitiveness of a retired life, apt to find joy everywhere,— in a word, she had brought him security. And he had been forced to send her away!

While the night was beginning to thrill with the distant approach of dawn he lived over again his first meeting with Thérèse de Rodange.

The construction of a villa on the hillside of Publier, overlooking Lake Lemán, about a league from Evian, where he left the train, called him occasionally to Chablais. He was just finishing the superintendence of this work. It was a rustic villa

with a terraced roof, ornamented with loggias, verandas, balustrades, not without pretension, and which would doubtless have been more appropriately placed on Lake Maggiore or Lake Como, the home of pillars and marbles, than in this region at once refined and old-fashioned, with its chestnut trees, its vineyards, the soft outlines of its shores, the ruggedness of its mountains, and its lovely everchanging sky which is not that of Italy, but seems rather to yield itself to mists, like a northern sky, and veils the outlines of objects with gentle caresses. By degrees, as he came to know better this kindly country with its careless grace, he had come to realise how abnormal were these classic lines, this crude colouring, which he had used so much, how much better adapted to the neighbourhood of a Grecian sea, with its unchanging vegetation. Accustomed to planning city houses, he now made the discovery that there is a special architecture suited to the country, the apparent irregularities and disproportions of which become advantages. The overhangings roofs of old farmhouses, throwing a bluish shadow over walls yellowed by time, enchanted him. But in his pride he resisted these impressions, urging against them discomfort and lack of conveniences. It was essential that houses should be adapted to the requirements of modern life — light, air, cleanliness, comfort, arrangements for rest and facilities for going and coming, for the daily invasion of outside affairs. In former days people built in hollows to be sheltered

from the winds, without seeking wide views of the surrounding country, without large windows, actually as if a man sought his home for the quiet of private life, a refuge from the outside world!

One day, as he was considering without much enthusiasm the general impression given by his nearly finished villa, a clear voice, somewhat raised, exclaimed behind him,

“Goodness! how ugly it is.”

Indignantly he turned about to confound with a glance the impertinent perpetrator of the remark. It was a fair young girl, dressed in white, quite guiltless of insolence or effrontery, even of boldness, for her whole face crimsoned. Hardly had the blood receded from her cheeks when she blushed again, as the Savoy mountains, illumined by the setting sun, suddenly take on an afterglow after the shadows have fallen upon them. At that very moment, a mason, drawing near, addressed Mark as “Mr. Architect” and thus made her aware of the enormity of her blunder. She immediately murmured:

“Oh! I beg your pardon, sir!”

She was so much confused that he hastened to reassure her with somewhat disdainful consideration:

“Criticisms are permitted, Mademoiselle.”

“Mine are of no value,” she replied apologetically. “You understand, I know nothing about it; and the old house I live in is so different from this villa — this fine villa.”

“Too fine altogether,” he laughingly acknowledged, for he noticed her sweet manners, and he wished to put her at ease.

“That is it, it is too fine. I am not accustomed to such things. About our home there is no pretence of anything fine, no luxury, but it is all so associated with the surroundings that it looks like a part of the landscape; one hardly distinguishes one from the other. And I—I find that beautiful.”

“May I come and see it?” asked Mark.

As she hesitated to reply, he urged, for every denial only heightened his desire.

“Is it far from here?”

“Oh, no, only a few steps!”

“Kindly show me the way, then.”

Again she blushed; she was so full of life that her blood quickened at the slightest cause.

“It is a poor old shell. But I love it as if it were a living friend, and perhaps it really is. Promise me that you will say nothing against the dear old place, even if you do not like it. It would hurt me.”

He promised. At the end of an avenue he soon perceived an ancient, somewhat quaint building, covered by an enormous roof with a steep slope, on account of the heavy snows, set upon it like an over-large hat upon a withered face which it half conceals. A little clock tower served as a plume. A roman-arched door and mullioned windows ornamented the front, while the powerful lines of the

great beams, filled in with heavy masonry, were half concealed by clematis mingled with wild grape vines. Under the action of time and weather the well fitted tiles of the roof had taken on a brownish tint which went well with the beams and woodwork of the house. The whole building had a look of hearty gaiety, as of a stout old grandmother who can bear away the bell from the young girls when it comes to the question of work and appetite.

As Mark was silent she spoke up for her house, believing that he was finding fault with it.

“Oh! the old house has no style, of course; but it shows well among the trees. Do you not see how well it matches the chestnut trees around it? They are great balls of leaves with stout trunks to bear them. Such a heavy roof needs thick walls to support it,—and then the old house has belonged to the family for generations. Thus it has entered into our life at all times.”

“I find it very attractive,” said Mark, “and I can well understand how you must enjoy living in it.”

Scrupulous to avoid exaggeration, she murmured frankly:

“I weary of it, too, at times. When it rains, when the leaves fall, when the year begins, when the month ends —”

She herself laughed at the enumeration, and he looked deep into her eyes, guessing at the secret of this secluded young life buried in the country. Her hair was so abundant that it seemed almost disor-

derly, and of so light a copper shade that the colour of her eyes surprised him,— the dark, almost black, pupils, so dilated as almost to hide the iris, gave them the expression, at once melancholy and wild, of fawns that are kept prisoners in Zoological gardens, and that come without gladness to eat out of your hand. Here, before this quiet old house, at that very instant, he intuitively felt that this girl would some day become his wife, and that he was to be,— oh, the mockery! — the fairy prince of this Sleeping Beauty of the Wood.

Not wishing to reply to confidences rather guessed at than heard, he pointed to the house, and under the pretext of architectural changes he drew the plan of an entirely new life:

“Yes, it should be given more air; a bay window opened here in the drawing-room and a veranda there for the dining-room. One could imagine oneself out of doors among the trees. A conservatory could easily be added. I am sure that you have neither electric light nor telephone.”

“Alas! not even water, sir.”

“Not even water! incredible! it will require a thorough overhauling. However, it will answer for the summer. The rest of the year, it could be shut up.”

He was tempting her with this list of improvements. She listened, shocked yet yielding, vanquished in advance, and none the less somewhat ashamed of her defeat.

"Leave the house?" she said.

"Certainly."

"And what about Mamma?"

He made no reply, and even began to repent of all he had dared to say so carelessly, and which, anticipating his thought, she had only too well understood. He remembered how she had bent her head; doubtless she was acknowledging to herself that she would even leave her mother also, if *some one* asked it of her.

They took a few steps side by side in the chestnut avenue. Through the branches, for all their thick covering, could be seen between tree and tree, as through open windows, the blue lake, a blue almost white, as it were a nuptial blue, so fresh and new, so restful to the eyes. Now and again little shivers ran over its surface as if to certify that it was alive, and the points scintillated with light. A fish leaping up after an insect was made visible by a sudden flash, as of a carbuncle. The lateen sails of the Meillerie boats made a pathway of light. This shadowless landscape, this young girl, unknown and sad, but so easily made happy, so prompt to hope, this inviting house embedded in trees, which, even when closed, had an air as of an indulgent grandparent, all this was so happily harmonious, that he felt his usual restlessness fall from him, like a leaf already dry before autumn. He felt so far away from Paris, with its feverish life and its women. Perhaps happiness looked like this.

“Till we meet again, Mademoiselle.”

“Good-bye, sir.”

The light gate that shut off the small domain closed upon him; but he dimly felt that *some one* would wait for him.

As he recalled the period of his engagement, in which he was surprised to find a timid charm, such as that with which a convalescent half fearfully resumes life after a severe illness which had led him to the brink of the grave, he noticed that day was breaking. The train was painfully dragging itself up the side of the Jura, and behind the curtain of fir-trees, rays of red gold announced the sunrise.

How short the night had seemed — so full of memories of *her*! Why, during this journey, had his vagrant thoughts, ill-controlled by a half-slumbering will, been enticed beyond the narrow limits within which, since his betrayal, he had kept them as in a devastated park? Shortly, after passing Vallorbe and the Swiss frontier where Lake Lemman would appear — *her* lake — he would seek on the opposite bank, among the chestnuts, the site of that old house that had been the first witness of his love, now so wounded. He had neither torn it down nor repaired it as he had threatened to do, and he had revisited it only once with Thérèse for the last hours and the funeral of her mother, Madame de Rodange, who had died shortly after their marriage. How should they have found time to revisit it? So many

pleasanter country places were open to them, and in the most beautiful regions on earth. Perhaps, yes, perhaps, Thérèse, driven away from her home, might have come there with *him*? Then why revive those memories of their betrothal? Like all the other memories that she had left him, they were like withered flowers — poisonous flowers.

Yet he had showered precious gifts on this little country girl whom fate had brought so low. For her he had planned and built that wonderful house in the rue de Franqueville, with its many windows, its pure design, and its decorative surroundings of the greenery of La Muette. He had set free her captive youth, lifted her up, set her in the pathway of pleasure. Truly he had loaded her with benefits. He had wanted her to be radiant, triumphant, and to accomplish this he had stopped at nothing. His sole surprise had been that she had not been more touched by it, more proud of it all. Yet for a number of years and even up to the last she had given herself up to his direction, precisely as he had expected her to do. False and secretive as a slave, she had been plotting her treachery. . . .

The lake smiled to the morning. He turned toward Evian, which on the other side was sleeping beside the water. His gaze travelled up the hill slope of Publier. It was there. . . .

Suddenly the vision vanished; the train entered the Lausanne station.

III

THE Simplon express stops at Lausanne only a brief ten minutes. Mark Romenay knocked at the stateroom door where Juliette was sleeping, and Madame Acher, already dressed, opened it.

"Miss Juliette is still asleep," she said in a low voice.

"Very well, there is still time enough: but perhaps it is best not to let her sleep too long. We shall be at Martigny in an hour."

Having given his instructions, he got out upon the platform. A few of his fellow travellers, in long dust coats, their caps drawn over their eyes, were walking up and down to stretch their legs and breathe the morning air. A vendor was pushing before him his little cart laden with fruits, drinks, sandwiches, and also books and newspapers. Here and there through a lifted window shade he would pass a bowl of coffee to a half-dressed woman.

"Swiss papers?" asked Mark, to pass the time. He was given the *Lausanne Journal*, and hurried back to his car, at the porter's call of "All aboard."

As far as Villeneuve, at the entrance of the Rhone, the railway overlooks Lake Lemane. Vine-

yards, villas in gardens, and then a series of stations that seem to run into each other like a string of beads, Vevay, Clarens, Montreux, Territet, lying between the railway and the shore. The first sun rays were playing on the white house-fronts, gilding the strand, kissing the waters; but on the opposite side the slopes of the Savoyard Alps were still in shadow. The dispersing mists trailed about their summits like carelessly fastened gauze veils, blown by the wind. Then appeared the *Dent du Midi*, with its seven peaks.

This view, so fresh and calm, after the interminable night did not change Mark's train of thought. He was still looking backward, seeking on the slopes of Publier the old rustic roof, which was too far away and too well hidden among the trees for him to distinguish it. Under that roof, on a summer's day like this, the disaster of his life had been prepared. He gazed with hostile feelings on this mountain panorama, widening out around the lake and again suddenly narrowing as the train entered the Rhone valley.

Only a year ago he had followed that same route with Thérèse. Then they had gone farther, as far as Viège, to take the little railway that leads to Zermatt, from thence to climb to Riffelalp. The doctor, somewhat concerned about Juliette's pale cheeks, had advised a stronger and purer air. In the evenings at home, when no social duty pressed, they had weighed and compared the

attractive offers of the guide books. He suggested the Tyrol, the Savoy; the hotel of the Riffelalp, at a height of two thousand metres, with its modern conveniences, its southern exposure, its fine walks, its forests of larch trees and Austrian pines, had gained the day, in spite of the banality of a vacation in Switzerland. How well he remembered their arrival! From the Weisshorn to the Cervin were all those snowy enchantresses, uprising above their seas of ice, rosy under the setting sun! Little Juliette, all excitement, had clapped her hands. On the threshold — the bell having already rung — were the Norans, in evening dress, scanning the new comers, and surprised and delighted at the chance that had brought them fellow country-folk.

He had met André Norans in Rome, the last year of his stay in the Villa Medici. André Norans, younger than he, as apt for pleasure as for disillusion, now ardent for life — almost too much so — and again weary of it all, a lover of painting, sculpture, music, of sports also, a lover of everything indeed, variable in character, full of contrasts, with quick enthusiasms followed by deep depression, at once bold and sensitive, with sudden bursts of gaiety in the inns of Frascati and Tivoli, and at other times depressed and bored; too highly endowed with imagination not to divert his companions, and too capricious not to repel those who, refusing to squander their lives, try to regulate them, sometimes at the cost of individuality. Thus André

Norans by turns attracted and repelled him. On Mark's return to Paris he had lost sight of him, when he heard of his marriage to the beautiful Simone Méris, well known in society and whom for some time report had engaged to Mark, as she herself would perhaps have desired, rather however from ambition than from affection. She was one of those fashionable girls whose portraits appear in the magazines, as if they made a part of the thousand attractions of the city. After her marriage she had continued to shine. She was noted for her wit and for her fine clothes; the last somewhat a matter of surprise, as the modest means of the Norans was a fact of common knowledge; but otherwise she was never spoken of. Mark had sometimes met her, admired her, perhaps almost regretted her; and when they had reached the Riffelalp he had felt a curious kind of embarrassment on meeting her, all tricked out in her finery, while Thérèse in her crumpled travelling suit, her features bearing traces of fatigue, her colour gone, seemed almost a nonentity in comparison.

As often happened at summer resorts, they had been much thrown together. The hotel was filled with English and Germans, and foreign languages were heard everywhere; the mere music of French words would have been enough to bring them together. The lovely Simone made the first advances, for she was having a stupid time. Her son Edward, of about the same age as Juliette, soon became the

devoted playmate, or rather the slave, of the little girl, who was quite capable of leading a whole train of small boys. Norans, however, was often absent. Infatuated with the delights of mountain climbing, he would disappear for a day or two, reappearing with a sunburned face: he had been up the Dent Blanche or the Gabelhorn. Once he had even made the ascent of the Cervin, whose pyramid, silhouetted against the Zermatt horizon, seems to hypnotise all who gaze upon it. Then for days he would hardly stir out. He would tell of his exploits with all the false modesty of Alpine climbers who take on a knowing air, the better to emphasise the facility with which they have accomplished those wonders, posing thus as a sort of hero. Nevertheless he at times condescended to organise a little trip that every one could share, even the children: the Gornergrat without the electric railway, Lac Noir at the foot of the Cervin, the Findelen Glacier. He laid himself out on these poor little plans. By the newly adopted fad, sunburn and frost-bites seemed to make him all the handsomer in the eyes of his admirers, as young German girls admire the sword cuts on the faces of German students. Whether from deliberate purpose or not he thus won a doubtful distinction. Mark remembered, looking back, that the beautiful Simone, whom, however, report represented as much in love with her husband, had shown herself particularly amiable to himself, displaying for his benefit all her practised graces. How well he

understood the arts of women! How he scorned them, however much they amused him! His contempt spared Thérèse alone. He could never suspect her, since she owed him everything.

On his return from a short absence, made necessary by business which obliged him to make brief runs up to Paris, he was displeased at finding Thérèse tired, with sunburned skin and aching limbs. She excused herself for not having gone to meet him at the station.

“What under the sun have you been doing?” he had asked in surprise.

Proud of her exploit, though a little frightened at her unaccustomed courage, she had answered, blushing through her tan:

“Climbing the Breithorn: that is something, isn’t it?”

Now the Breithorn, although more than four thousand metres in height, is a ladies’ climb — the classic test of their powers of endurance. From the Riffelalp it is made in two stages: you leave the Riffelalp in the afternoon, pass the night at Theodule’s cabin, and at early dawn you begin the climb to the summit, returning to Zermatt in the course of the day. Mark knew all about the trip, but this unusual initiative on Thérèse’s part surprised and irritated him.

“What did you do with Juliette while you were gone?”

She blushed more deeply, while hastily defending herself:

"I left her in Madame Acher's care. Madame Acher is so trustworthy and careful. And besides, Simone was with them."

"Simone?"

"Yes, Madame Norans; she asked that we should call each other by our Christian names."

What progress they had made to come to this intimacy! In his memory he went over the rest of his questioning:

"But surely, you did not go all by yourself?"

"Oh, no, you may be sure of that. Mr. Norans looked after every detail. We had a guide and a porter with us, Guide Auber, and Fridolin Burger. They are celebrated."

"And you spent the night at Theodule's?"

"Yes, I was in a room; they were out on the straw. We arrived there late, and there was only one bed left, which I had. However, I never slept a wink. You know that I was never away from Juliette at night before."

"As I was absent, it would indeed have been better not to leave her."

Repentant, or affecting to be so, she had acknowledged that she had done wrong. They had pursued the topic no further: but the following day, with an affectation of contrition and in her most caressing tones, she had told him, half timidly, the whole story

of the climb of which she had been so proud: the sensation of loneliness, almost of fear, that had come over her that evening at Theodule's hut, the beauty of the morning light on the snow, the slow, interesting walk over the glacier, the almost sacred emotion that she had experienced in reaching the summit, the sound of the wind all about them; recurring again to the magnificence of the evening in that vast solitude. He had listened without encouraging her, but envying her her delight in it all. Had she even then had an understanding with André Norans? The letters which he had discovered seemed to put their treachery at a later date; but how was he not to carry back his jealousy and hate to that time, when the snare of friendly comradeship had hidden the more tender feeling? Madame Norans had felt no alarm over this comradeship: she had relied on the charm of her beauty, as if beauty could preserve love! He himself had attached little importance to it: he relied upon gratitude allied with love; as if love ever thought of gratitude! In spite of his youthful disillusion and all the disdain of women which had grown upon him since his first cruel love affair, he in his honest uprightness could never have conceived of such double dealing as, from that day, had made its home at his fireside.

To please Thérèse, now quite possessed with the spirit of the mountain climber, he had been weak

enough, a few days later, to consent to go with them on another expedition, the ascension of the Cima di Jazzi which overtops Macugnaga in Italy. He remembered the irritation he had felt during the climb and on their return, at seeing her so light of foot, so elastic of tread, while he, less enthusiastic, had been mainly occupied with keeping his breath, and not falling too far behind. He did not admit it in his review of the past, but he could not but remember how surprised he had been to observe his wife's newly found liberty of movement, and her triumphant expression, arising from the pleasure of discovering in herself unsuspected powers, and no doubt also, desires, never dreamed of until then. . . .

After Villeneuve the train, leaving the shore of the lake, enters the Rhone valley. His satchel was ready, his travelling rug rolled and strapped, Madame Acher had informed him that Juliette was awake and being dressed. To fill up the three quarters of an hour that remained before their arrival at Martigny, and above all to rid himself of the fixed idea which was overmastering his mind, he looked for the newspaper he had bought and opened it; but he was ruthlessly brought back to his own tragedy, now become a public matter, open to all curious eyes. Before he had turned the first page, devoted to European politics, his eyes fell upon the headlines: *The Accident on Mount Velan*. It instinctively

drew his attention, and he read these lines, dated the day before, as cold and colourless as a deposition:

“MARTIGNY, Saturday, July 15.

“The search expedition sent to find the unknown couple whose disappearance we noted in yesterday’s issue, who last Sunday left Bourg-Saint-Pierre without a guide to attempt the ascent of the Velan, has at last succeeded. As everything gave reason to suppose, they, like so many other tourists, were victims of their own rashness. Attempting to descend to the Cantine of Proz, by following the arête, they made a false step and falling, would have rolled to the very bottom of the abyss, had they not been stopped by a ledge of rock by which they were caught and where they hung suspended; there the monks of the Grand Saint Bernard, after many explorations of the mountain, found them on Thursday morning. The man was dead, but the woman was still feebly breathing. It is a wonder how she could have survived the lingering agony. Leaving till the next day the task of bringing down the corpse, the monks immediately undertook the rescue of the unfortunate woman, a long and even a most perilous undertaking. By dint of unimaginable efforts they at last succeeded in carrying her, in the course of the evening, to the Refuge. From thence she was carried in a litter to the Hospice, where she is sure of receiving the best of care. There is indeed no hope of her life. That evening she was still able to speak, but she is now in such a state of prostration and weakness that a fatal issue may be expected at any moment. Still, this morning she was alive, after that fearful journey! Though no serious wounds have been

found, it is believed that there are internal injuries, due to the fall of between four and five hundred feet.

“The corpse of her fellow traveller will be brought down to-day to Bourg-Saint-Pierre, and no doubt it will be sent to-morrow to Martigny, if, as is probable, friends request its possession. The two victims have been identified by their notebooks and portfolios: the deceased is Mr. A—— N—— of Paris, and the survivor is Mme R——. We are at present unacquainted with their ties of relationship. We are informed that the families of both have been notified from the hospice.

“This sad accident, occurring thus at the opening of the season, should prove a sufficient warning to over-confident and inexperienced Alpine climbers, who venture on these dangerous ascents without guides or other necessary precautions.”

Mark Romenay, who had intently pursued these lines, threw the sheet violently from him. No doubt they would arrive too late: the mountain would have completed its victory.

Again he clearly perceived that he preferred the pain of knowing *her* to be alive, to that of believing her to be dead. A second time he felt the shock of a pain for which there is no cure.

Juliette, bright as a ray of sunshine, burst into his section:

“Good morning, papa; have you slept well?”

“Yes, indeed,” he answered her, though his face was lined and his eyes heavy; “and how did you get along?”

“Oh, me! Madame Acher had to wake me, and we are not there yet.”

A few minutes later the train stopped at Martigny. As Mark preceded his daughter and Madame Acher, followed by a porter loaded with hand luggage, he perceived Madame Norans before him. A priest, who seemed to be carefully scanning the faces of the travellers, approached her and asked her name. She drew back for a moment, her erect figure swayed, but she quickly recovered herself, and entered a carriage, followed by the priest. No doubt she knew.

Mark searched the approaches to the railway station. No one was there to meet him, no one was thinking of him. Then Thérèse must still be alive. Without realising it he felt his heart dilate. He breathed more easily.

He at once ordered a carriage from the hotel to take them to Saint Bernard; with the best horses the time is hardly less than ten hours, while the post-stage, that changes horses at Liddes, takes eleven. After a hasty breakfast, at which the child and her governess took their time while the horses were being put to the landau, he called for a local newspaper. Perhaps he might find in it a more detailed account. They handed him the *Petit Valaisan* saying:

“The Sunday edition, just out. It is very well edited, as you will see. There is a long account of

the Saint Bernard accident. It is very sad. That poor gentleman. . . .”

Mark was tempted to ask: “How about the lady?” But a natural reserve prevented his speaking of her with a restaurant waiter, and he buried himself in the newspaper. It was a popular journal, intended for the spread of news best suited to its readers. Several columns were devoted to the accident under a general caption divided by subheads:

THE MOUNTAIN TRAGEDY

OUR GOOD RELIGIOUS DISCOVER THE TWO TOURISTS AT
THE FOOT OF VELAN

THE MAN DEAD: THE WOMAN LIVING

THE RESCUED WOMAN’S STORY

“The two tourists, who last Monday undertook the ascent of Mount Velan without a guide, were found Thursday morning by our good religious, the monks of Grand Saint Bernard, whose devotion is well known throughout the civilised world. Unhappily one of the tourists, Mr. Norans of Paris, was already dead. We have been able to reconstruct the progress of events, and our readers will be grateful to us for giving the continuous story, with all the details, which led up to the search and the melancholy discovery.

THE JOYFUL DEPARTURE

“On the evening of Saturday, July eighth, two travellers arrived at Bourg-Saint-Pierre by the Châtelard railway from the Chamounix valley; they stopped at the

Hotel Napoleon and registered their names as Mr. and Mrs. Noirant. They were in Alpine climbers' dress, with caps, Tyrolese knapsacks, and leather belts. On Sunday they attended mass in the old church, and on coming out they appeared much interested in the women's head-dresses, and the costumes of the country.

"After consulting with the hotel keeper about the difficulties of their proposed ascent they ordered their heavy luggage sent on ahead to the Hospice of the Grand Saint Bernard, which they expected to reach on Monday evening, on their way to the valley of Aosta. They kept with them only the essentials of their equipment: knapsacks, coloured spectacles, alpenstocks, drinking gourds, etc. Their plan was to reach the Velan by way of the glacier of Valsorey, and descend on the other side by the Cantine de Proz.

"All Alpine climbers of the canton of Le Valais know that though the ascent of the Velan — from whence the view is incomparable — is somewhat difficult, it is not dangerous, provided the necessary precautions are taken. It is a deplorable thought that the late catastrophe may lessen the zest for mountain sports, and the number of our visitors. A guide is most helpful and even necessary for the Velan excursion, and excellent guides may be found at Bourg-Saint-Pierre. The Valsorey glacier is full of crevasses, and at the higher part it is necessary to resort to the aid of steps cut in the ice. Finally the descent to the Proz glacier is particularly bad. It follows the arête, which is composed of loose and broken stones that at every step threaten to roll down into the gaping abyss. On the Italian side it becomes a perpendicular wall. On the Swiss side the slope is some-

what more gradual, but even there it is dangerously steep. Seasoned tourists prefer to pass the arête straddle-wise.

“In vain did the manager of the Napoleon Hotel (whose prudence is well known) try to dissuade his guests from undertaking this dangerous excursion without a guide. They laughed his fears to scorn, they were confident in the success of their trip, sure of themselves, thoughtless and gay. For whatever reason they wished to be alone.

“On Sunday afternoon they went up easily to the chalet of Amont,—a two-hours’ walk from Saint-Pierre. They ate with relish the soup, eggs, and cold meat which they had brought with them, reserving for the morrow a fowl and some other provisions.

“The next day, at two or three o’clock in the morning, before dawn, they set out again. A little shepherd boy, Augustine Bolley, nicknamed Tintin, showed them the trail that they had to take at the top of the moraine, east of the Valsorey glacier. He left them a little beyond the rocky wall of Mont de la Gouille. There the two travellers bade him good-bye, giving him a five franc piece. He was the last person who saw them before the accident: no one met them on the mountain.

THE SEARCH

“It was not until Tuesday evening that the Brothers of the Grand Saint Bernard hospice telephoned to the Hotel Napoleon to make inquiries about some travellers, whose baggage had arrived and whose rooms had been engaged for the preceding night. At the cantine of Proz where they might have halted nothing had been seen of them. It was late in the evening for a search

party to set out, nevertheless a party of guides was organised, composed of the brothers Menoud, with Peter Millet, Victor Bontemps and Charles Corsaz. That same evening they left Bourg-Saint-Pierre and reached the chalet of Amont. The following day, Wednesday, the search was begun on both sides of the Velan, by the Valsorey glacier and by that of Proz, for also from the hospice a rescue party had set out, lead by Abbé Sonnier, whose name is well known in all this region. This party had with them two or three of their best St. Bernard dogs, well trained for these mountain conflicts.

“However, the entire day passed without result. In vain did the guides search the crevasses of the Valsorey glacier and the steep sides of Mont de la Gouille. The Brothers, after climbing the Proz glacier, took the shortest way, and explored, without result, the rocks where a mishap is less likely to be perceived than on a snow-covered slope. Finding not a trace, they made an oblique toward the Aiguille du Velan. In spite of fatigue, unwilling to relinquish their noble enterprise, they camped for the night at a height of nearly three thousand metres.

“It was only on the morrow, Thursday, when again they took up the search by way of the Col de Mouleina, that while following the arête their efforts were at last crowned with success.

FOUND AT LAST

“As they were following the arête, Father Sonnier noticed a slight break caused by a recent slide of stones. If the lost tourists had fallen over on the Italian side, no doubt they would have rolled to the bottom of the abyss; but as we have said, the slope on the Swiss side is less steep; and, in fact, the monk leaning over, per-

ceived about two hundred metres below him, on a ledge of rock, two human forms, one lying prone, the other, that seemed to be kneeling, with uplifted hands in an imploring gesture. The Brother shouted to inform them that succor was at hand, but no sound came back in response.

“The party was provided with long ropes. With these, by prodigious efforts, for there were no outcropping ledges and they needed to be careful to avoid setting the loose stones rolling, they could descend to the two unfortunates. From the shelf that served them as a refuge it was as impossible for them to descend as to climb up.

“The man was already cold in death, but the woman still lived. After three days and nights of atrocious suffering and without food, one may judge of the state of physical and moral depression to which she was reduced. Abbé Sonnier succeeded in reviving her a little, with the aid of a few drops of rum and water, but she could take no food. She was still attached to the body of her fellow traveller. They detached her, and leaving the corpse where it was, they devoted themselves to the rescue of the survivor. There was no time to lose, and it was a difficult task, for the rope gave her agonising pain, and she was too feeble to render the slightest assistance. At last they raised her up to the arête. Then they had to find a sheltered place where they might lay her to give her the first aid. Hardly had they begun when she swooned away and they believed her to be dying. However, Father Sonnier succeeded in preparing a cup of hot bouillon, of which she could take two or three swallows.

SHE SPEAKS

“Abbé Sonnier, whom we saw that evening at the Refuge, furnished us with the last details of our story. But he refused to speak of the rescued woman. The following scene was therefore told us by a member of the rescue party, whose name we withhold, though we certify to the authenticity of his account:

“After having tried to drink the bouillon, the unfortunate woman, still in a shattered condition, began to weep; then she murmured faintly,—

“‘I am going to die,’ or ‘I want to die.’

“They comforted her, promising that she should be saved. Then she asked plaintively:

“‘*Where is he?*’

“No one knew what answer to give her; she looked at Abbé Sonnier, who was by her side, and addressed him directly in broken words:

“‘My good Father, I am going to die. . . . So he must come . . . to forgive me.’ . . .

“The incoherence of her words made those about her think she had gone insane; they tried to calm her, and then began the descent of the mountain. It took five hours to reach the Col de Mouleina: the bearers were so weary that they feared they could go no farther, and thought of camping out again that night. Happily the customs officers who watch that pass, so frequently used by smugglers, lent a strong arm to our exhausted lifesavers. At eleven that night they reached the Refuge. Here the unfortunate woman, who all along the way had gone from one fainting fit to another, was laid upon an improvised bed; she fell into a fit of fever and delirium. Sometimes she would cry out: ‘*Stop us!*’ as if she were

still falling, and again: '*Forgive me!*' Then she would call upon her late companion in a heartrending voice: '*André, André . . . come with me!*' Several times she uttered the name '*Juliette.*' They believed that the end had come.

AT THE HOSPICE

"When morning came she was still breathing, and even, in a quiet moment, she became conscious and asked for the priest. Father Sonnier remained alone with her for several moments and succeeded in giving her a little hope and confidence. He made her comfortable in the carriage of Mr. Marquet of Martingy, who had generously offered to move her, and went on before her to the Grand Saint Bernard hospice, so that on her arrival there was a bed all ready prepared and the best of care arranged for. A passing physician, Professor Maurici of Turin, consented to postpone his journey to Aosta to examine her. But his diagnosis leaves little hope. The feeble pulse and feverish condition indicate the exhaustion of an overtaxed organism, which must have overcome only by a miracle both the violence of the fall, and the three days' agony of hunger, cold and moral anguish. Still, there is neither a broken bone nor an internal lesion: simply bruises and cuts on the right side of the face and on the right shoulder and hip, which must have received the full force of the fall.

"A tragic detail: her clothes, frozen by the snow that fell in the night between Tuesday and Wednesday, and wet inside with the blood from her wounds, were stuck to her flesh: it was necessary to tear them off bit by bit, or cut them away.

"In the meantime another party returned to bring

down the corpse in a bag: they must have spent last night at the Cantine of Proz, and probably they will bring their sad burden to Martigny to-day.

A MYSTERY

“The two victims of this catastrophe carried on their persons several articles that have served to identify them. He was André Norans of 26 rue Cortambert, Paris; she is Madame Romenay, without address. It is said that word has been sent to the family of the defunct, by means of data furnished by the rescued woman during the interval of lucidity which preceded a second period of unconsciousness.

THE THEORY OF SUICIDE

“This mystery gives colour to a hypothesis which we publish with all reservations, for we desire to give no credit to it, not accepting it ourselves.

“According to this romantic theory, the two Alpine climbers had voluntarily devoted themselves to death on Mount Velan. The proprietor of the Amont Chalet, where they passed their last evening, noted their pre-occupied manner, long silences followed by whispered words. In reply to his observation on the danger of going up the mountain without a guide, they answered with a careless gesture, which seemed to signify:—‘Danger, death, what is that to us?’

“Finally they took care to send away the little shepherd, who met them that Monday morning, who had offered to accompany them without a fee.

“It is only too easy to reply to all these tales, ‘Improbable!’ for if they had wished to kill themselves they had only to throw themselves down the perpendic-

ular Italian side of the mountain. It would have been certain death. It is painful enough to be obliged to acknowledge their irregular relations, without adding the accusation of an attempt on their own lives.

LATEST NEWS.

“We have just telegraphed to the Grand Saint Bernard hospice. As we go to press Madame Romenay still lives; but Professor Maurici did not hesitate to pronounce her recovery impossible, and it is improbable that she will survive the night. She had not spoken again, and was already in a comatose state. If the religious services — for the suicide story is considered untenable — of Mr. Norans are held at Martigny on Sunday, the public will desire to show their sympathy for this family of strangers so cruelly tried.”

Several times in the course of his reading, Mark Romenay had been interrupted.

“I’ve had both honey and jam with my breakfast,” Juliette observed.

“We are ready, now, sir,” Madame Acher informed him.

Finally the hotel manager, who had formerly served in fine houses, officially proclaimed that Monsieur’s carriage was at the door.

Mark had motioned them all away without vouchsafing a reply. Having read the last words of the *Petit Valaisan* he arose and after settling the bill he asked timidly,

“Will you let me keep this paper?”

“Keep it, sir, keep it as a gift. It only costs a cent and I have it free. The Velan affair interests you? A sad accident, is it not? Foreigners are so imprudent, sir, on the mountains. It is unfair to us, it injures our business.”

To cut short this chatter, which so wounded him, Mark had already helped his little girl and the governess into the carriage, an open landau, so old and dilapidated that it would be impossible to close it in case of rain.

“But it will not rain,” asserted the confident hotel keeper.

They set out, and beyond the bridge they entered the narrow gorge encumbered by the refuse of floods, at the bottom of which runs the Dranse, a noisy torrent of dirty water, upheaved by great eddies. It was still in shadow, like a reserved domain, and it seemed as they passed along as if the sun could never enter it. Daylight might indeed touch the summit and upper mountain sides, might overspread the Rhône valley, so wide in comparison; but how could it ever creep into this crack? Yet how they longed for the sun’s warm rays, that they might be warmed by their touch, for it was cold in the gorge. Juliette, wrapped to the shoulders in shawls and rugs, invoked them most familiarly.

“Sun, dear little sun, my hands are frozen. I hold them out to you: why do you not come? You stay away up there and never come down here at all.”

As her father, who usually entered indulgently into her fancies, was silent, she added:

“What are you thinking about, papa?”

He seemed to come back from far away, as he replied, not ungently, but in a detached manner that seemed to add to the distance of years:

“About nothing. I was only gazing around.”

“Where are we going?”

“To the Grand Saint Bernard. It is very far; the torrent makes too much noise for us to talk.”

He drew back into a silence which the child did not again attempt to interrupt, intuitively understanding the longing for quiet with which she felt herself surrounded.

The free, minute account given by the Swiss paper, with its mixture of utilitarian regrets and moral reflections, had struck Mark with the chill which is always caused by a vivid revelation of life. He felt it to be an accurate account of all the acts of the two victims,—the two heroes! He recognised the inconsistencies of André Norans’s character,—lively at Bourg-Saint-Pierre,—taciturn at the Amont chalet: the persistence of mother-love in Thérèse’s calling in her delirium for Juliette, after naming her lover. But as it often happens when hearing testimony, that one impassioned utterance peculiarly true to nature dominates the whole, two phrases, two pictures, recurring again and again to his memory since their departure from Martigny, tortured him like a horrible sight from which he

could not avert his eyes. One was a vision: "Two human forms, one lying prone, the other which seemed to be kneeling with uplifted hands as if imploring. . . ." The other, still more heart-rending, was only one incident of her suffering: "Her clothes, frozen by the snow and soaked with blood from her wounds, were stuck to her flesh. They were forced to tear them away or cut them off bit by bit. . . ."

Certainly, he had felt the rancour and rage of the first days rise again, when he read in this country paper, less discreet than that of Lausanne, his own name, the good name that he had given her to guard, and which now was thrown out for the public to trample on: but this woman, on a narrow ledge of rock, wounded, vanquished, dying of cold, hunger and pain, fastened to a corpse, the corpse of her lover, was his wife. This bruised and bleeding flesh, which they had had to lay bare with torture to her, had been the beautiful flesh of his own flesh. How could he refuse to have pity? Ah, how desolate was this narrow gorge through which lay the way to her! Would his journey never end? Let him relieve, by the sight of Juliette, the horror of a death described in such detail, and then turn away from that Calvary—the Calvary that she had endured for three long days,—the mere thought of which was more than he could bear.

"Faster!" he called to the driver.

"Eh? It's steep."

After ruin-crowned Sambrancher, they entered the vale of Entremont. At Orsières they had to breathe the horses and take luncheon. These are old towns with grated windows, swelling balconies, and narrow, badly paved streets, their overhung garrets supported by posts. The stone-roofed clock towers have looked with equal calm upon the passing of troops of sheep and of soldiers, of shepherds and conquerors. It was already the peace-bringing solitude of the mountain.

Mark Romenay hastened their departure. Beyond Orsières, the driver pointed with the end of his whip to a white dome towering above a high level with steep sides:

"It is the Velan," he said; adding, "You know about the accident . . ."

But no one questioned him, and the conversation went no farther. At Bourg-Saint-Pierre the driver would have stopped at the Hotel Napoleon. From there, Thérèse and André had set out gayly, only a week ago!

"Keep on," commanded Mark, in a tone that admitted of no reply.

At the end of the village a group of people barred their way. Why this crowd? What were they waiting for? What spectacle were they straining their eyes to see? Why did they not move back to give them room to pass?

"They are waiting for the funeral," was the reply.

“What funeral?”

“That of the dead gentleman.”

A car passed bearing something covered with a white sheet, with palms, and wild flowers from the mountain. Thus André Norans crossed the path of Mark Romenay for the last time, and Mark raised his hat and saluted.

At sunset, he at last perceived, at the top of the pass, in a circle of tragic-looking rocks, an enormous rectangular building, high, ancient, massive; its yellow walls caressed by the level rays of the dying day. Mules were being unloaded before the door, peasant women from the valley of Aosta, in striped skirts, their heads covered with gay kerchiefs, tourists, priests, were coming and going, arriving and departing, and among them great dogs with white coats touched with brown spots were walking about, gentle and grave. This was the hospice that for nearly ten centuries has guarded this passage of the Alps.

“She is there,” thought Mark. “In a few minutes I shall see her. Will she be dead or living?”

Juliette had fallen asleep, they had to rouse her.

IV

ACCUSTOMED to great hotels, or rather, palaces, where at every arrival, footmen and porters rush to meet the traveller, Mark Romenay was surprised at being met by no one at the door of the hospice. Crowds of people were indeed going in and out, quite at home in the freedom of the quiet evening, but they brushed by him, elbowed him, apparently quite unaware of his presence.

“Ring twice and Father Clavandier will come,” suggested the driver.

“Father Clavandier” is he whose duty it is to receive strangers. He came to meet them with smiling face,— a little abbé, wearing over his shoulders the thin white cord of the canons of the Augustinian order — and with a most engaging air, asked:

“You wish to pass the night here? Come right in, for the dinner-bell is about to ring. You ought to have good appetites — this air creates a void.”

He spoke volubly, with utmost cordiality, shedding abroad an atmosphere of good humour, which, however, met no response from Mark Romenay, who coldly asked to see Father Dornaz at once.

“The Prior? Impossible. He is at this moment

receiving my lord the Provost, who has just arrived from Martigny in a post carriage. He cannot be interrupted."

"It must be done, nevertheless."

With all courtesy the abbé temporised:

"Listen, sir, the important thing just now is to find places for the night. We have just heard of the impending arrival of a young ladies' boarding-school. Five minutes hence I may not have a place fit for you. Not even a room for this dear little girl and this respectable lady. As for you, I shall do my best to reserve one for you, also: but you may have to consent to a roommate, all our rooms having two beds. But 'In war time one must do as in war time.'"

And his cheerful laugh resounded through the entrance hall.

The Grand-Saint-Bernard is not a hotel. It affords hospitality without remuneration to the passing traveller, who at the moment of departure may leave in an almsbox a voluntary offering. There was nothing to do but accept the rule of the house. Mark, thus disciplined, had no alternative but to submit, and the little procession followed "Father Clavandier" up two pair of stairs, through a long passage to the extreme end of the building.

"There," said he, addressing himself particularly to Juliette, for he had a soft spot in his heart for children, "you will be quite comfortable, I am sure."

It was a large chamber containing the most rudi-

mentary furniture, two wooden beds, a table and some rush bottomed chairs, but all so clean, so neat, that it had the peaceful atmosphere of a nun's cell. The little girl, interested in all the details of their journey, ran to the window.

"Oh, papa!" she cried, "come quick and see."

The hospice was in shadow, but the fading daylight still dwelt upon the heights. The rocky barrier was touched with warm colour, a mixture of crimson and violet; even the snow of the highest peak was flushed by it, like a virginal cheek touched by emotion. A cloud suddenly rising from behind the mountain crowned it like a flaming tower. The battle between day and night was going on up there, but the golden battalions of the sun held their own for the moment, while from the distant valley darkness was bringing up its reinforcements, sure of ultimate victory.

"The Velan," said the priest; "he has his cap on: a bad sign for to-morrow's weather."

Mark recoiled from the scene as from an enemy. He darted a piercing look at his host, who ran on artlessly;

"Two unfortunate tourists were lost there the other night,—one of them is dead."

He stopped. Was it intentionally? Romenay suspected as much and forced himself to play at indifference, asking:—

"What became of the other one?"

"The other one? I am not sure. It is a woman.

They brought her here. This morning she was still living, but I have had no news of her since. This house is immense and each of us has his own work."

Work was his natural excuse from satisfying the traveller's curiosity. So near, and yet so ignorant! He spoke calmly, in all good faith, guessing nothing. To Mark the minutes were hastening by; death, like himself, was perhaps wandering through these halls, seeking the door where he was expected. There was no time to lose, and drawing near the religious, while Madame Acher busied herself with unpacking, he repeated his request:

"I must see Father Dornaz at once."

He spoke in a low tone, but with such authority, that the monk yielded. Secluded from the world by the daily task, his one thought its proper accomplishment, he did not attempt to understand, but he felt himself in the presence of a controlling will.

"These ladies," he replied, "can go down to the refectory; I shall be there and will show them their places; yours, sir, will be reserved beside your daughter. As to your room, it is on the other side, looking toward Italy. Follow me, you will see it as we go. I will take you to our Prior. You may try for an audience with him; I will not conceal from you that it will be a difficult matter."

"You are wrong there, Father," replied Mark undaunted.

In fact, the Prior, though in conference with the

Provost, received him as soon as he was announced. The rarefied mountain air had aged the priest before his time. Thin, pale, slightly bent, with white hair, he gave the impression at first of an exhausted traveller, scant of breath and with spent strength. But this impression did not last long. On the contrary, it needed but a single glance of his limped blue eyes so full of calm, to produce the impression of extraordinary power as of the spirit of youth. It was not the young, surprised candor that precedes knowledge, but peace after struggle, the serenity of certainty.

Mark was already asking:

“Father Prior, I want to know —”

But he checked himself, as if he had spoken too loudly, discourteously. In spite of himself he was submitting to this quiet ascendancy.

“Sir,” began the Prior, with the gentleness that pervaded his whole nature, “I have good news for you. Our dear invalid will live, she is saved.”

“Ah!” said Mark simply.

“After a bad night, a night of cruel suffering, during which we many times thought that we must lose her, her temperature went down, and the pulse returned to normal. The crisis is now passed. Professor Maurici of Turin, who devoted his entire time to her care, left us after breakfast, reassured, and even somewhat surprised by a tenacity of resistance which he had not counted upon. To-morrow,

Dr. Doret of Martigny will come to see her. More-over the treatment is not at all complicated. Quiet is the essential thing."

The Prior paused here, doubtless expecting a word from his interlocutor, whom he continued to observe, to study, to fathom, but Romenay kept silence, and the Prior continued:

"Above all, quiet. She is still so weak. You cannot imagine what awful anguish she has endured! I will tell you. It is necessary that you should know."

"I do know," murmured Mark.

"How do you know?"

"I have read . . . in the newspaper."

"In the newspaper? Already! . . . They must be in a great hurry! After receiving your telegram, only this morning, when under the seal of secrecy, I told Professor Maurici of your coming, he advised, or I should say, commanded me to spare her all emotion, all fatigue. 'Let there be no interview this evening,' he insisted, 'to-morrow, perhaps, but only if she passes a good night.' She is now out of danger, but the slightest relapse is to be feared."

The Prior paused, as if expecting a protest. Somewhat surprised at hearing none, he went on.

"You cannot, therefore, see her this evening. Re-sign yourself to wait until to-morrow. You must be very weary, yourself: such a hurried journey, and in a state of such anxiety, is very wearing. A night of rest will do you good, then to-morrow, if the gain

is perceptible, I will inform her cautiously and will take you to her."

Mark had not once interrupted him. How could he order his thronging thoughts? He had come to bring pardon to a dying woman; during the interminable journey he had been weak enough, generous enough, to fear that he might arrive too late: now that he was at last here, ready to fulfil his mission, the mission that he had imposed on himself in spite of his memories and all the pain of his past, to be told that Thérèse was safe and sound, but that in her condition she could not at once receive him! Well, since they put him off till the morrow, he would think better of it, would deliberate more at leisure. Pity took its flight, leaving behind the old familiar pain. Still, the prior's words held him to the present, and he could not speak his thought. Therefore he continued silent and motionless.

The Prior was gently dismissing him.

"Go in peace, *my child*," he said, addressing him as he would speak to a sinner after absolution. "You will permit me to excuse myself. I have much work to do this evening; but Father Clavandier will look after your comfort. Rest quietly until to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" repeated Romenay with no motion to retire; "I do not know that I shall see *her* to-morrow."

Father Dornaz looked inquiringly at him, a look that at once tranquillised and dominated him.

“Why not? You came to see her. She expects you.”

“She expects me? You have told her then?”

“I had received your telegram. This morning she kept calling for you, so I told her that you were on the way.”

“She was calling for me? What did she say when you told her?”

“Do you want to know? She was silent for a long time. Then she said: ‘I am surely going to die, am I not?’ I protested. Then she said,

“‘If I am not dying, he will not come.’ After another period of silence, she said: ‘And Juliette?’ I guessed that Juliette was your little daughter.”

“Yes,” murmured Mark; “she is here.”

The prior studied him intently.

“You brought her with you: that is well, I had hardly hoped for that. The child’s name, alone, moves her to trembling and tears.”

With an impulse of rebellion against an influence that was dominating him against his will, Mark Romenay replied:

“We shall not see her to-morrow — neither my daughter nor I. It is impossible.”

He said no more. The priest knew his secret, he ought to understand. He did understand, and at once plunged his probe into this suffering heart.

“Should you have preferred to find her dead?”

As an unbeliever, called to make formal denial of

his former faith, refuses, from a sense of seemliness, from respect for the past, or from an obscure consciousness that something still abides beneath the flow of time, Mark recoiled before the direct question:

“Oh, no! What can you mean?”

But had not the prior formulated the unavowed wish which had been tormenting him these twenty-four hours past?

Her death, after a full pardon, would have restored Thérèse to him; life would continue to part them. Life was the impassable barrier. He recognised it now, and after his first instinctive denial he frankly confessed:

“Perhaps that would have been easier, in fact.”

Father Dornaz, keeping his eyes upon him, had followed the inward struggle.

“The ways of God,” he replied, “are not known to us. He requires more from you than you were bringing.”

But this time it was Mark who broke off the conversation, as if he could not permit another to enter into his privacy.

“Listen, Father Prior, I do not yet know what I shall do. The circumstances are so different from what I expected: they require a new examination, a new decision. In any case, I beg you, if you see her before I do, not to tell her of my arrival nor that my daughter is here.”

"You will see her then?"

"I hardly know as yet. I will decide to-morrow."

The priest seemed to reflect and holding out his hand to Mark, he repeated simply, almost affectionately:

"Until to-morrow then. Go in peace."

Mark went down to the refectory. It was a great, dimly lighted room, and he had some little trouble in finding the place reserved for him beside his child. Juliette hardly noticed his arrival: she was chattering and laughing with a little girl of her own age in a seat near her, Sylvia Monestier, whom she had met several times in Paris, full of delight at the surprise of seeing her again at the Grand Saint Bernard. The world is so small that it is seldom, wherever one goes, that one does not find acquaintances, and those least expected.

Sylvia's father, Michael Monestier, came up and touched Mark on the shoulder:

"You here? What chance brought you?"

Mark, who found his presence awkward, tried to explain.

"The mountain — the air has been ordered for my daughter."

"For mine too. We have just come from Courmayeur, and we are going on to Caux, above Lake Lemán. The air of Caux is mild and comfortable. Why don't you come too? the two children will get

along together finely. It is tiresome for one alone;—if you only knew!”

“I am undecided as to what we shall do.”

He received coldly, almost haughtily, Monestier's friendly advances. But as soon as the latter had left him, he regretted having cut him off so short. His appeal for help,—“It is tiresome, alone,” followed by the exclamation, “If you only knew!”—which might have been insolent and ironical, simply revealed Monestier's preoccupation with his own affairs. This man, who had lost an adored wife, had since devoted himself to a solitary life, carrying his love memories, his incurable sadness, into whatever place promised to be advantageous to the health of his only child. He evidently had no suspicion of the chance that had suddenly called Mark Romenay there.

Mark regretted his coldness. He knew of Monestier's bereavement, and the absorption of his mind. He saw him occupied in cutting up a chop on his daughter's plate, and paying her other maternal attentions, and he gave a friendly nod to mitigate the effect of his cool reception of Monestier's advances. And here, seated before a steaming dish, amid talk and laughter, he perceived that his own life's tragedy was of interest to no one, did not suspend the regular course of events,—passed unnoticed in the noisy tumult of a table d'hôte dinner.

Forty or fifty tourists were assembled at the narrow horseshoe table. Father Clavandier, presiding

in the centre, was watching to see that the waiters did not neglect the late comers. The fare, though simple, was plentiful. Among these guests of different tongues and lands there was an atmosphere of cordiality, more friendly than at a hotel, due to the reputation of the hospice and the kindly way of the Brothers. Juliette and her little friend were making advances to two little Italian girls of about their own age sitting opposite. In their red caps and blue gowns, their jolly brown faces lighted up by dark eyes,—almost too large,—though plain, they gave promise of future beauty. At one end of the table a group of spectacled German students, blond and loquacious, were rolling out the interminable phrases of their native tongue. Near them a too elegant couple were talking loudly—he in an impeccable dinner jacket, high white collar, black tie and lustrous linen, hair carefully brushed, shining, pomaded; she, in hunting costume,—both like fashion plates, seven thousand five hundred feet above the sea. A party of English Alpinists, tanned and sunburned, were discussing an ascent, to judge from their gestures. All this motley crowd, stimulated by the fresh air, the free life, the exercise of walking, were eating voraciously, under the uncertain light of the few lamps, which sometimes left the faces in shadow and again touched them with vacillating patches of light.

“I am having such a good time, papa!” exclaimed Juliette suddenly.

The little sleepy-head of their arrival was transfigured with happiness. With the childish power of utilising all that the present moment gives, she was imagining all sorts of vacation parties, during which they would live in impossible villas, like this place, so hard to reach, somewhat vast and terrifying with its endless passages, but occupied by such amusing people, most of whom spoke an incomprehensible jargon that reminded her of the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel, in her Bible story book. How far the child was from guessing that her mother — that dear Mamma, who had disappeared so mysteriously six months ago, and about whom she had come to understand from her father's silence and Madame Acher's reserved manner, that it was wiser not to speak — was here, under the same roof, barely escaped from death, so feeble that she must be carefully spared the slightest emotion. What would the child say if she were told she would see that mother to-morrow? But no, she should not see her. Young minds should not be agitated, and as for himself, what had he decided?

What had he decided? He put it away from his thoughts. Physical needs had gained the ascendancy; the comfort of the present moment dulled his pain and his will power; he felt a sort of luxurious relaxation in repairing his strength after the fatigue and strain of the journey. Indeed he no longer remembered his anguish, he simply let himself go. This roast beef with potatoes, though

a bit tough, was savory, and this well cooled wine was pleasant to the palate. Life's most cruel, most hopeless hours have their moments of relief. And the human machine, under reconstruction, is being prepared to meet life's trials once again.

Mark's train of thought was interrupted by a great clatter at the door. One might have supposed that a regiment of soldiers were arriving at their cantonment. The blare of trumpets, the roll of drums, would not have surprised any one.

"It is my boarding-school," explained Father Clavandier.

A crowd of girls, from fifteen to eighteen years of age, wearing travelling cloaks and carrying Alpenstocks, their long hair hanging down their backs, their bright faces glowing with health, burst into the refectory, laughing, chattering in shrill, high-pitched voices. Two or three distracted teachers, like sergeants with undisciplined recruits, were trying to bring them into line. But already the leaders of the party were seizing the empty places at table, while the others watched such guests as had arrived at cheese or fruit, giving them to understand that they must make haste and give up their places. With good or bad grace every one yielded, and Juliette, the cup of her happiness quite filled by the racket, smiled upon the crowd as she rose.

"How funny it is, papa, at Grand-Saint-Bernard!" she exclaimed, "and what a fine idea to leave Paris and come here!"

She clapped her hands, jumped up and down, pulled Sylvia Monestier's hair. Sylvia, less easily excited under her watchful father's eyes, appeared scandalised by all these carryings-on.

Out in the hall Juliette spelled out the far-famed inscription, in gilded letters on black marble:

NAPOLEON PRIMO FRANCORUM IMPERATORI SEMPER
AUGUSTO

"Napoleon got down here:" explained M. Monestier to the two little girls. "He was a great General, always victorious."

But the excited Juliette had no use for a history lesson just then.

"I know, I know all about it," she interposed. "In the first place, he did not get down—he climbed up. Besides, Madame Acher saw him."

"Madame Acher saw him?"

She replied as if reciting a lesson.

"Certainly; he was mounted on a white mule, carelessly holding the bridle with his finely formed hand."

The old governess, just behind the little group, blushed as if her early love passages were being revealed. Mark beckoned to her.

"The child must be very tired: she must go to bed at once."

But Juliette protested, exclaimed, rebelled.

"Not yet! not yet! It is all so funny; besides, papa, you have not signed the big register."

“What register?”

“That one there, in the hall.”

There was a register in the entrance hall in which travellers signed their names. M. Monestier's stood last on the list. Sylvia had bragged about it to Juliette while at table — children take pride in unexpected things — and Juliette was anxious to gain a like superiority. So Mark with paternal condescension sat down and took up the pen. But at the moment of writing, he changed colour. How was his name compromised by the indiscreet account of the *Petit Valaysan*! A woman bearing this honourable, this well-known name had been found half dead on the mountain, in the company of her dead lover. No, no, he could not thus make public avowal that he was the husband of the survivor. In fancy he already heard the sarcasms, the allusions, the ironical remarks, and before the open book he was again overwhelmed with a sense of outraged feeling. He would go, he would quit the detested place to-morrow.

By way of calming himself he cast his eye over the register. A little above that of Monestier, among the morning's arrivals he saw that of Edmund de Baulaine, one of his acquaintances — *Mr. and Mrs.* Edmund de Baulaine. Now Edmund de Baulaine was not married: he had run away with Mme Durban, the pretty and captivating Manette Durban, so frail, so delicate, so light, so frothy, so evidently misunderstood by her countrified husband,

— who, to crown all, refused to get a divorce on account of their two children, and also, it was said, because of the enduring love for her which made him an object of universal ridicule. Michael Monestier, reading over Mark's shoulder, followed the direction of his eyes:

“Baulaine! He is here then?”

“You see for yourself.”

“His departure from Paris made a pretty scandal. How long ago it happened! It was before. . . .”

As people fall into the habit, somewhat surprising to the rising generation, of dating events as before or after the war, so Monestier had fallen into the habit of dividing time, as before or after his wife's death. He added:

“I am sure, however, that no one talks about it any more.”

“We are talking about it,” observed Mark, with some bitterness. He quickly signed the register, but so illegibly that it looked more like *Remy* than *Romenay*.

The boarding-school girls, having expeditiously despatched the hospice dinner, were overflowing the common hall, the passages, staircases and even the door-steps. While their sleeping arrangements were being made, they babbled, joked, sang, took possession of the entire building. Some who had left the table before they were through were finishing their biscuits or their oranges, showing their teeth like young puppies. There were ugly ones among them

whom the future would make pretty, there were others who had not to wait for the future to be pretty. Most of them, however, were at the awkward age, with figure and manner more like a boy than a girl. One of them went so far as to whistle. Several, however, had passed beyond this uncertain period, were more careful of their manners, carried themselves well, and instinctively looked about in search of mirrors which were not there.

These girls had added to their alpine costumes some little tasteful touch. Their open air excursion had given them an incomparable charm of freshness and youth. Two of them, special bosom friends, walking with their arms around each other's waists, their hands concealed by the wealth of long light hair rippling down their backs and overflowing their shoulders, were exchanging secrets in English in their musical voices. To Mark who could not help observing them, their youthful prettiness seemed a personal injury.

"Some day, very soon, to-morrow perhaps, or even this evening," he thought miserably, "they, too, will be loved. Some day, very soon, they will be faithless and cruel. . . ."

Juliette, quite taken by storm, wandered among them, receiving here a smile and there a caress. Her father with some irritation again called to Madame Acher to take her to bed. Michael Monestier also summoned the maid who accompanied his little daughter on their travels, to perform a like office.

Returning, he seated himself beside Mark, with the question:

“Did not Madame Romenay accompany you?”

Mark gazed at him, and realising his candour and innocence, answered truthfully:

“Yes, she is here.”

“Tired out?”

“Very much so.”

“Mountain sickness no doubt. Madame Monestier was subject to it. The great altitude of the Saint Bernard often causes an oppression, a difficulty in breathing. But no one stays here long. You are aware that the rule of the hospice prohibits a longer sojourn than twenty-four hours. They have been obliged to adopt this measure because of the lack of consideration of certain guests who would stay on indefinitely without putting any gift in the box, as the Brothers make no charge. Caux has only a thousand metres of altitude. My poor wife was enchanted with Caux.”

And with this thought, unable to contain his feelings, Monestier rose to take leave.

“Excuse me, I always stay with Sylvia now when she goes to bed. It is terrible for a child without a mother. You do not realise your blessedness.”

Monestier's acquaintance with the Romenay household dated from *before*: he was unaware both of the separation and of the recent catastrophe. Every one in this world pursues his own idea.

“You do not realise your blessedness.” Mark

stolidly accepted the statement, so pitiless in its sarcasm — the sarcasm of life rather than of the speaker.

He felt that he must leave the house, get outside, where he could breathe, in the solitude of night. As he was putting on his overcoat, for the air was cold, he brushed against Edmund de Baulaine. The latter was not ignorant of the separation; perhaps he had learned from the newspapers of the accident on the Velan, and the names of the victims. But with outstretched hand and smiling face, as if an unexpected and happy chance had surprised him, he overflowed with joy in at last meeting a fellow-countryman, almost a friend. Without losing an instant, so long had he been deprived of a friendly ear, he began to air his troubles.

“Yes, we are on our return from Italy, on our way to Switzerland. Travelling bores one less than staying in one place. Changing about gives less time for thinking over the past. We are both here. Manette is ill, of course. You don’t know what it means to have a woman about who is always ill. It is truly awful. Never at liberty to do what you like, never care free, no sort of fun. At times I simply can’t endure it; I am seized with a wild desire to cut the whole concern. . . .”

“The whole concern” — his mistress and his love. He laughed lightly while telling these bitter truths, not to a life-long friend, but to a mere club acquaintance, lost from sight and met again by chance.

Having little natural reticence, he simply spoke out the selfish horror of physical suffering which is the mark of the natural man, impossible to endure it or to see it endured by those belonging to him. Thus intimacy had killed the passion that had been the talk of a Parisian winter.

“Illness,” continued Baulaine, with lively humour, “ought to be reserved for couples legitimately married.”

He even dared to run on with the subject, so famished was he for some friendly listener.

“Ah! if Manette would only go back to her husband! It seems he is willing to take her back. He is a good hearted fellow. I would willingly relinquish her to him.”

At this he began to laugh, as if his remarks were quite in Parisian vein. He spoke most familiarly of Manette, as of a notorious woman, and avowed with playful cynicism his weariness of the whole affair, which had turned out such a failure.

“How fortunate to have met you here, to have some one to talk to. To-morrow you shall meet Manette.”

Mark, still with his cool and distant air, bade him good night. This man with his curiosity and indiscretion was no more to be dreaded than Monestier. Like Monestier, like every one, he was full of his personal affairs. Every one on earth follows his own ideas, is interested solely in his own trouble.

And in suffering or pain, each man is alone, infinitely alone.

The hall door stood wide open: Mark went in. Things were now quieting down. The harmonium, after having been punished by the boarding school maidens, was silent at last. In the common hall where guides, muleteers and peasants were in the habit of congregating, the vague sound of their voices was gradually dying away. The tired travellers were gone to their rooms. Evenings are short, here.

Mark went down the outer stair and set his face toward the Italian side, as far as a little lake, the smooth surface of which reflected the crescent moon's quivering rays. The flying clouds, which from time to time passed across it, made it seem as if bounding along the sky. A dreamlike glamour overspread the night landscape. The tragic circle of black rocks and mountains seemed to approach threateningly and then recede, like so many fantastic shadows. And then again the light, falling on a glacier, would drop a necklace of glistening silver on the snowy shoulders of mount Velan.

Here on the heights, the feeling of being quite alone with the evening communicated a sort of ecstacy to the jaded traveller. The fresh, unsullied air was like a hasty kiss brushed across the lips. The stars were more kindly, the silence, which like a far-off orchestra, accompanied the deep voice of

the wind, took on a solemn impressiveness. Soothed by these nocturnal forces, Mark made his way slowly back to the hospice. Its black mass was brightened here and there by a lighted window. He did not realise how long he stood watching them till one by one they disappeared. At last only two were left in the main body of the building where visitors were lodged; then one of these was extinguished. *She* was there: he was sure of it; and because of the night-lamp revealing her retreat, he felt as if she were more alive, even though still suffering and in the presence of death. She was there so near him, so near and yet so far.

It might well move him to pity: yet not even with the thought of Juliette, nor with the memory of Monestier's despairing words: "When a girl has no mother, it is terrible . . ." could he force himself to forgive the woman who was not going to die.

In memory he saw her on the threshold of the home which he had forbidden her ever again to enter; he saw her on her return from her lover's apartment, her lips still moist from his kisses; she was wearing an autumn suit, a gown of black velvet to which her long sable stole and muff gave zebra-like reflections, contrasting so harmoniously with her hair, her magnificent waving hair, so luxuriantly thick and long that she had doubtless had trouble to twist it up under her toque after it had been loosened. The clinging gown revealed the outline of her tall lithe figure. What an ardent love of life

was expressed in this young creature, who had groveled despairing at his feet, when he drove her away!

Another vision replaced this memory: On the glacier that he had caught a glimpse of in the moonlight, earlier in the evening, up there, *two human forms, one lying prone, the other that seemed to be kneeling, her hands lifted in supplication. . . .* That was the attitude, final, known to the world, in which he would always hereafter see her. Her life, since she was to live, would be fixed in his mind in that posture, as if carved in marble. When the door of death has been opened to two beings of whom only one is called to enter — they cannot thus be divided.

Yes, death had erected to this guilty love, which it alone — and not life — had interrupted, a mausoleum of which Thérèse could henceforth be nothing other than the guardian.

Mark felt two despairing tears roll slowly down his cheeks in the cold night air.

V

THE next day was Sunday; Mark had come to no decision. He had sunk into sleep as into a bottomless sea which never gives back its victims. Yet on awakening he found perplexity, rather than grief, awaiting him. Since Thérèse's life was saved, she had no longer need of his sorrowful pity. He had no wish to see her again, yet he could not think of going away without seeing her.

Accustomed to decide promptly, he scorned himself for his uncertainty. His decision was awaiting the course of events — but what events? He had no idea.

All the early morning he wandered idly about with his disordered thoughts and still could come to no decision. While Juliette and Madame Acher went to Mass in the hospice chapel, he took a short stroll, as far as the little lake on the Italian side of the mountain, where he had gone the evening before. As the driver had prophesied from the signs upon the Velan, the weather was threatening. Though the Col still stood out clear against the sky, fog entirely covered the valley, and was rising up the mountain. It came on so rapidly that Mark met it

at the turn of the path, which seemed suddenly to fall into an abyss. Soon he was entirely surrounded with it, as by an invading army — this thick fog that separated him from everything. He would have believed himself cut off from all the world had he not faintly heard, as if smothered in the clouds and dimmed by distance, the ringing of cow bells which now seemed below him, down in the pastures of the Aosta Valley. This far-away sound, coming from Italy, was the call of the inhabited country. To his over-wrought feelings it was also the far-off call of life, to one who has thought himself face to face with death.

As always on the heights there were light spaces between the rolling mists. Suddenly as he had been surrounded by fog, so suddenly he was freed from it. He leaned over in search of the herds that had aroused him in his momentary solitude, but the plain was still invisible, and he turned back to the path. An old woman of the valleys, in a red and yellow shawl, passed him, going down to her home. Her mouth was full, yet she attempted to accost him, for she had something to say.

“Eh!” she began, her face contorted by the effort to swallow and talk at the same time. “Do you know which is the finest palace in the world?”

“No, Madame,” he answered indifferently.

“It is there. You may eat, you may drink, you may sleep, and they pray for you, all for nothing! Everywhere else you must always give money.”

After this declaration, which had seemed to weigh on her mind, she continued on her way unburdened, laughing to herself, like a child. She had had a good day, and she knew that at her age a good day is a red letter day, and you must not let it pass too rapidly. Mark followed her with his eyes, then turning, looked with more kindly feeling on the great building which thus gave joy to passing poor folk, and also held the secret of his heart and future.

He went in and joined his daughter in the chapel; the main part was filled with Italian women in bright head-kerchiefs, steeped in the holiness of the place, giving themselves over to acts of piety, as ardent in prayer as in eating, or even as in love. In a corner one was nursing her baby without losing anything of the pious ecstacy or the prayers of her companions. When the boarding school girls sang a hymn, all this music loving people rose and seemed uplifted with holy enthusiasm. The priest was just finishing the mass. As he pronounced the benediction, Mark recognised the Prior in the chasuble, saw his calm and luminous gaze resting on him, and felt that the benediction was especially meant for him. In his sensitive state of mind everything seemed to touch upon his own tragedy, of which he shrank from knowing the outcome.

In the refectory, to which he took Juliette and Madame Acher, as they had not yet breakfasted, Monestier, waiting upon his daughter with maternal

tenderness, was pouring out a second cup of coffee and milk for her.

"You would never believe how they gorge themselves here because it is all free; I am not referring to the school girls, they are young and are running about the whole day long; but every one does it. A few minutes ago there was a German taking his sixth bowl of coffee."

"With bread and butter," added Sylvia, attentively listening.

She too was stuffing herself, and Mark now understood better the distorted face of the old woman he had met on the hill. Juliette, full of imagination, was burning to communicate the information Madame Acher had given her.

"Papa, the country around here is full of soldiers."

"Of soldiers?"

"Yes, indeed: after Napoleon there came Charlemagne. And also that General Marin . . . of Marengo, who is buried in the church."

"General Desaix, you mean."

"Oh, yes, he died in the snow; so they put up a white monument over him."

A great hubbub in the halls made the children hasten to finish their meal.

"It's the boarding-school girls. . . . The boarding school is going."

They ran to the porch; the teachers were desperately trying to form into line their undisciplined

pupils, who at the top of their fresh voices were singing an English hymn. It was intended as an offering of gratitude for the hospitality of the Hospice. Father Clavandier, on the doorstep, accepted their music with a smile, after which all the young people joined in a parting salute, and started on their way, soon to be hidden by the rising fog. The last to disappear were the two fair-haired bosom friends who skipped along, their arms still around each other's waists, at the end of the line.

"We too are about to leave," observed Monestier. "Our carriage is ready. When do you go?"

"We? oh, to-morrow," replied Mark, evasively.

"They permit you to remain, then, in spite of the rules? On account of Madame Romenay's health, doubtless."

"Yes, on account of her health."

"Give her my compliments, I beg. You should come to Caux when she is able to be moved. It is mild and comfortable, salubrious and well sheltered from the winds. The children would be company for each other."

In his desire to give Sylvia a pleasure he urged their coming, he almost entreated it.

"Yes, perhaps I may come."

"That is fine, we shall expect you."

He carefully lifted his daughter into the landau and as Juliette continued to bid her little friend the most tender farewells, he stooped down and kissed her:

"Until we meet, then, my little girl; your papa has promised to bring you to Caux where we are going to stay, when your mamma recovers from her fatigue."

"Mamma?" she said, surprised.

That dear name was no longer mentioned before her. She herself never spoke of the absent one, rarely thought about her now. This mention thrilled her through and through, as if she were hearing a pathetic fairy tale. She flushed deeply.

"A mother is so good to little girls," added Mr. Monestier.

And stepping into the carriage, he repeated:

"Till we meet again, good-bye."

They had gone out of sight, but Juliette still remained motionless. Surprised at her attitude. Mark, who had not heard Monestier's words, was still more astonished at her expression.

"What is the matter? Do you miss Sylvia so much?"

"Oh, no, but he spoke about Mamma."

"Who did?"

"Sylvia's papa."

"What did he say?"

"That she was resting, and that she was so good."

The child, drawn by a new desire, lifted up her little body as a flower lifts itself to the light. She was apparently expecting to hear a promise, an announcement of a presence. Trembling, she fixed

upon him eyes full of entreaty. A feeling that she could not explain took possession of her. Would her father tell her nothing? All that he had planned to say to her and had not yet said, in case he should take the child to her who had been dying yesterday, who was recovering to-day, was now miraculously made easy. Juliette was waiting. And he was silent.

She did not insist. She concluded that she had been mistaken, and that ended the matter. With the facility of childhood she was soon diverted. For a moment, like a grown person, she had opened the door of memory to a living mother; in her mind she had seen her own dear little mamma, her mamma of other days, her mamma who had flown away, vanished, she did not know how or why. She had seen her here, quite close, and it was not true. You can dream then even when awake, but the dream passes away so quick: there are so many queer things, especially at the Grand-Saint-Bernard, where people come and go as in a mill.

Mark was relieved of the embarrassment into which his own silence had plunged him by Edmund de Baulaine, who was seeking him to ask for the return use of the carriage by which Mark's party had come.

"Your driver tells me that you are to remain longer at the hospice. Before engaging him I wanted to make sure."

"He is free to go where he likes."

“He is lucky,” answered the young man with a forced smile that was more like a grimace. “Free, what a beautiful word! Don’t you think so? Really to live one must be free, but as for me, wherever I am, everything bores me.”

With a gesture he pointed to the mountains that encircled the buildings,—Chenallette and Mont Mort:

“Here especially, you cannot breathe, you suffocate.”

He would carry his boredom with him to the remotest corner of the world, however much he might hope to be rid of it. Mark looked at him wonderingly. Was this the handsome spendthrift, gay, dapper, with the graceful manner that so naturally goes with finely cut, regular features, and yet is so often deceptive? Now he was dejected, fretful, negligent of his person. Passion indulged to its bitter end had sufficed to transform him thus. He dragged love with him as a convict his ball and chain.

“I must let Manette know,” he concluded; “she takes so long to get ready.”

And like the most dependent and least resigned of husbands, he disappeared.

A little later, Mark, wandering about like a lost soul, from the inside of the house to the outside, saw the couple set off. She with her invalid air, covered with shawls and travelling rugs, showing under her tied-down bonnet a faded little face, once pretty, of the kind which pleases in Paris society, but which

here among the mountains seemed so childish and yet at the same time so old, comedy and tragedy at once; the man, impatient at delay, annoyed by all the hand luggage, affecting to be extremely polite, and trying to hide the melancholy which overspread his features, now so worn and drawn; she full of her airs and graces, he, forcing himself to play a part. With their studied gestures, their powder and their arts, they resembled a couple of actors on the road in the provinces playing the parts of man and wife. As they set off she once more showed her sad, refined face, while he leaned back, making himself comfortable. So the vision of love disappeared at the turn of the road.

Mark followed them with his eyes as far as he could see them. Ah! had he come suddenly upon Thérèse and her lover with such faces, what a revenge would have been his! But instead of that, death had made them triumphant. . . .

At this moment, Father Clavendier, recruiting a squad of non-paying travellers, that he might show them the curiosities of the place as a good cicerone should do, saw him, and drew him into the brigade. They gathered in Juliette in the corridor, and crossed the courtyard together.

“Where are you going?”

“To the kennels.”

No one goes to the hospice of the Grand Saint Bernard without paying a visit to the dogs. Their celebrated breed, kept without cross, and their gene-

alogy as carefully noted as that of the most princely family, goes back to the very foundation of the hospice. Careful selection has strengthened and toughened the breed; and they have become acclimatised to the high mountain air.

In honour of their visitors, no doubt, the whole pack received the crowd of strangers, like the school girls singing in chorus, by all barking in unison. The sound was like a chime of fine bells, full and resounding, filling the space within the encircling rocks.

Juliette, somewhat startled by the noisy reception, clung to her father's arm.

"Silence, Barry! Pluto! Lion! be still," commanded the monk.

"Oh! those are the names of the dogs Madame Acher told me about," said the child, recalling her lessons with her governess.

Nevertheless she hesitated about approaching the great creatures with their thick russet and white coats, lionlike heads, formidable chests, and stocky legs. There were about ten of them. One very old fellow, half bald, and slobbering, with two long teeth projecting from his muzzle, somewhat like a mastiff, affected her painfully.

"Don't be afraid, little Miss Juliette," said Father Clavandier, who seemed to look after her with special care. "These dogs are as gentle as lambs: give them this piece of sugar from your little hand. Barry, come here. Be nice to this little girl. There, you see!"

“He licked my hand,” said Juliette; “his tongue is real warm!”

And she ventured to stroke his heavy coat. The monk, pleased with her conquest, began to praise the fine animal:

“This Barry is the king of the pack. He has a magnificent voice; he is generous as well as courageous. He can dig his way through the winter snows, and rescue lost travellers.”

“Does he have a keg of wine hung around his neck?” exclaimed Juliette, delighted to verify the stories she had been told.

“I declare,” exclaimed the good Father with surprise, “this child is very well informed.”

“Madame Acher told me all about it.”

But the wonder-tale was not yet finished.

“Barry is the favourite of Father Sonnier, who has special care of the education of Messrs. Doggy. Every morning on the shore of the little lake they practise their exercises in ambulance service. And only a day or so ago it was Barry who helped to save the life of the lady.”

“What lady?” came quickly from all sides.

Juliette, full of interest, leaned eagerly forward. Pleased with the interest he had aroused, the monk answered:

“The lady who fell over the precipice on Mount Velan, and who barely missed death. We have her in the hospital. She will recover.”

Mark, intently listening, had been visibly uneasy

for the past few moments. He now pressed forward and took his daughter by the arm:

“Come, Juliette, we must go in.”

“Oh! papa, wait a minute! I want to hear about the accident.”

“It is of no use. Come with me!”

Could he let his child hear of her mother's accident in this crowd? He led her away with authority, in spite of the protest of the rebellious little face, which expressed without words her surprise at his unsympathetic act. It was borne in upon him that he could remain here no longer. Everything brought him back by abrupt turns to face the bitter question which he was trying to evade. Three times already that morning, when he had thought to escape it, forget it, temporise with it, he had been brought back to the same no-thoroughfare: Michael Monestier had aroused in Juliette's childish heart the sweet, half-forgotten memory; Edmund de Baulaine, symbol of love's irksome servitude, had excited by contrast his jealousy of that too perfect love on which heroic death had set its immovable seal, and like a haunted deer he now must flee the place lest the tale of his wife's fate should be poured into the interested ears of his little daughter. No, no, he must be done with this business at once; and hardly realising what he was about, he hurriedly knocked at the Prior's door.

The Prior was taking lunch with the Provost. There is nothing so maddening, to one who is passing

through a crisis, as the quiet continuity of regular habits in the life of those around him. The Prior gave him an appointment for two o'clock that afternoon and it was now noon. He was obliged to go down to the refectory and note again Juliette's pleasure in the cosmopolitan visitors of Saint Bernard. As for himself, he felt only impatient disgust at the spectacle. No one among them all even suspected the nightmare through which he was struggling, and which he feared to betray by some slight movement. But who, even among those most closely in sympathy, most receptive to impressions, ever suspects the inward agony of a friend? The blood pulses so rapidly and strongly through the veins that it seems as if it must burst through the skin and no one sees it. Torn hearts do not recognise one another! Even those who tear them do not always deign to observe it.

"Papa," exclaimed the little girl pulling at his sleeve, "what shall we do now? It rained while we were eating, but now the sun is shining again."

"You can take a walk with Madame Acher, out towards the little lake, only not too close to it."

"Might I pick some flowers if there are any? Perhaps I may find some on the edge of the snow. . . ."

When he returned the Prior was not alone: another brother, younger, more robust, with high colour, like one accustomed to the bite of frosty air, was with him.

"Our invalid," began Father Dornaz without noticing that this new presence seemed to paralyse Mark Romenay, "continues her admirable recovery. She slept the past night like a little child, and this morning was able to take a good meal. The nurse is delighted. There is no more trace of the fever. You can see her now without danger; you may see her as soon as you wish. I was expecting you this morning but you did not come."

Mark made no reply. He was gazing fixedly, as at an intruder, at this person in the corner, who seemed embarrassed at Mark's gaze. The Prior understood the silent question, and introduced the man as Father Sonnier, he who had discovered the two victims on the mountain, and saved Madame Romenay. Mark, still silent, bowed, but did not thank him. The Prior continued, gently imposing his authority:

"Father Sonnier will give you all the facts. This is why I invited him to meet you here. You have the right and above all, the duty, to know the details."

He made a sign ordering the Father to speak. The latter made no demur; he would probably have preferred to battle with rocks and ice, to assault the steep heights which defend the passes and hide perfidious crevasses; but since he had to speak, speak he would: there is no disputing the chief's command. His first words were practically a repetition of the newspaper story, except that the words of a living

eye-witness are not like those of the dead printed page; in them the past lives again. On the crest of the Velan which he had climbed, followed by the rescue party, he had noticed the recent fall of stones, had bent over the steep slope and seen the two unfortunates on that narrow shelf of rock, caught as by a miracle halfway down the almost perpendicular descent.

"He was lying flat, she was kneeling," interrupted Mark, who seemed greatly moved, "on her knees with her hands upraised."

Father Sonnier, surprised, was silent but asked no questions.

"That is precisely so," he said, approvingly, after a slight hesitation. "She had seen us, she must have cried out, but we could not hear her, her voice was worn out. I shouted to reassure them, and began to descend, my companions letting out the rope."

He passed rapidly over the perilous descent and came immediately to the meeting:

"When close to them I at last heard her cry, a continued moaning, like the whine of a little dog only a few days old. Quite exhausted she lay upon the corpse of her companion. They seemed like a single one."

"Stop!" exclaimed Mark, hiding his face as if he could not endure the vision.

The Brother, at this burst of feeling, begged pardon. He was sweating in great drops, far more

than if enduring the roughest and hardest physical exercise. This humble Hercules of the mountain had come up against the most difficult of all his labours: that of finding words delicate enough to portray the truth without reservation and yet make it endurable. Little apt to circumlocution of speech, he was naturally somewhat awkward; in his distress he appealed to the Prior:

“Help me, Father, I do not know how to tell these things, and you see how my words hurt him.”

Father Dornaz was about to intervene, when Mark, commanding himself, checked him:

“No, no, I beg of you, keep nothing from me. It was only a momentary weakness. It has passed, I must know everything. You yourself have said that it is my right and my duty.”

Obedient, the rescuer continued his account, only a little more slowly, like a loaded cart going up hill:

“The body of the other was cold. She let herself be raised and I gave her a drink. She wept and laughed together. It was necessary to untie her, for the rope that bound her to her companion had not been broken by the fall. Then we carried her away with every precaution. The corpse could wait.”

“Did she not protest against leaving it?” asked Mark.

“No, why should she? I have been present at

many accidents; and when the rope is unfastened, freeing the survivors from the dead, even from their dearest friends and relations, they never protest; death separates. . . . We went on to the Refuge. Not even for a minute did she lose consciousness, except for a couple of swoons. At first, I believed her to be delirious, because her words seemed incoherent, incomprehensible. She kept saying, 'He must come;' and again, 'Send for him. Won't you send for him to come before I die?' She gave no more thought to him up there on the mountain; that was what misled me. The next morning I found her calmer. She explained the situation to me, told me of your . . . separation. She gave me your name and address, begging me to telegraph you to come, that she might see you one last time and obtain your forgiveness."

Mark, who had given passionate attention to this narrative, repeated:

"It was she who asked you to let me know?"

"She kept asking me to telegraph. On my promising to do so she seemed less restless. And in the ambulance she fell asleep."

The good Father was silent, not without a feeling of relief of having finished his painful duty at last. But Mark after a short silence began to question him:

"How did Madame Norans hear of the accident?"

"The invalid (he dared not give her a name) gave me the address of that lady, also."

“Ah! And did she tell you nothing of those three days of agony on the mountain side?”

“Yes. . . . But what good would it do you to hear?”

The poor Father, anxious to keep silence on this point, turned to the Prior in appeal.

“Tell him the truth,” said Father Dornaz authoritatively: “The truth has virtues which we are not always able to realise; but which sooner or later make themselves felt.”

“Well. . . . It was she who first slipped, coming down from the crest, and dragged him down with her. They rolled down from a hundred and fifty to two hundred metres. She does not know what prevented them, in their bounding fall, from rolling over the narrow shelf that caught them. It seemed to her that the whole mountain-top went down with them, on top of them. Even then she did not faint, and though her whole body was cut and bruised, she felt that none of her bones were broken, while her companion, more badly hurt, was slow in coming to his senses: his right leg was fractured in two places, and I judge that a rock had broken his spine. When he came to himself he suffered agonising pain. Then began their Calvary. We must do them justice, Sir. I know what courage in the face of death means, for it is my business to be with those that meet it. The mountain is a rude school, and I have known many brave people. But those two! . . . God saw them!”

And this testimony, given by a man so accustomed to hardship, impressed one as authoritative.

"She, who could move a little, dragged herself around their narrow prison, and learned that there was no way out. Their only hope was in the help that seemed unlikely indeed, or very slow, to come. They had only a bit of bread and a little brandy in a gourd that had not been broken in their fall. He was the most injured, she offered them to him. He insisted on dividing them, but could not swallow the bread.

"The first night was not very cold, and the morning sun helped to warm them a bit. They were still hoping for rescue. . . . She threw various things down into the abyss, thinking that they might fall where some one passing might see them, and so serve as a signal. From time to time she shouted. Then night fell for the second time. He was losing strength, and in spite of his courage, he began to moan with pain. This second night was full of horror. It seemed endless, and day brought no relief. From this time she lost count of hours and memories. The weather changed and it began to snow, they must have feared being buried alive in the snow, which would also make search the more difficult, too. Their clothes, by turns wet and frozen, and stiff with blood from their wounds, were no protection against the cold."

"Yes," added Mark, "it was necessary to cut and tear them off, they were so stuck to her flesh."

Father Sonnier looked at him with great pity. The worst still remained to be told.

"You shall know all their anguish, sir. Alone, starving and frozen, beside this unfortunate man half broken to pieces, and howling with pain which she was unable to ease, she came at last in her trouble to lose faith in God. The abyss was there beneath them. To roll down was easy, and would end their troubles. She had only to pull him to the edge of the gulf and both would roll down together. For many hours — what day was it? the second or the third, Tuesday or Wednesday, she does not remember — this idea attracted and fascinated her. As he moaned more and more, she tempted him with the proposal that they should die together."

Mark, breathless, repeated the last phrase:

"She proposed that they should die together? Who told you that?"

"She did, at the Refuge, in a state of excitement in which she could not control her words. I was not the only one who overheard. Perhaps I understood her better than the others. That is why I am giving you these details."

"Who else was there?"

"The brothers Omer and Jules Menoud, of Bourg-Saint-Pierre, who had come over by way of Valsorey, and joined us in the search. And also Patrice, a servant of this house, who accompanies me in my excursions. You can question him if you like."

"That would be of no use; go on with your story,

Father, I beg of you; keep nothing from me. She proposed to him to die together?"

"Yes. And then this man who was at the end of his strength, who knew that life had nothing for him but torture, put away this temptation with a last effort of will. He encouraged her to try to live: 'They will come, they will come,' he insisted; 'for me it will be too late, but for you, you will live.' For my part I look upon this as a wonderful act of faith. And he did better yet: You certainly must know this. Not only did he tell her that she would live, but that she would live for her husband and little daughter, and that it would be better thus."

"Enough!" exclaimed Mark, who had risen.

But Father Sonnier would not give up his defence of the dead:

"You asked for the truth, sir. It is enough for me that he recognised his wrong doing, and renounced it. He renounced it, when he felt death approaching — when the true meaning of life reveals itself. And he also pronounced his boy's name."

Here the Prior gently intervened.

"Father Sonnier worships victims. He gives them wonderful funeral services in his heart, especially those who show courage without weakness. Finish your story, good Father."

"I have about finished. The third day, some time in the afternoon, he ceased talking, and the last

agony began. He was young and strong, and it took some time for death to overcome him; he breathed his last that evening. We found him with his eyes closed. No doubt she herself had closed them. She had to pass a night and another day by his side. How can one imagine it? She could not even pray for him, her teeth chattered so. She suffered so much that she became almost indifferent. Yet in spite of all, she struggled against sleep, she told us, that she might not be overcome by the cold. Sleep means the end, death. Her last agony was to see us on the arête, and try in vain to call us: She could not hear her own voice, and now she wanted to live."

"No, no," protested Mark, "she wanted to die."

"Except for the passing temptation of which I told you, and which will attest the truth of my story, she wanted to live. Each of those sad, weary evenings she wound up her watch. And the bread that her companion could not swallow, she ate to keep herself alive; she even gnawed at the edge of the gourd. We are all liable to be tempted, and I do not believe that any human being has survived a worse martyrdom than hers."

The Father stopped for a moment, then, not without effort in his natural modesty, he added with some warmth:

"That is all. If I have hurt or grieved you, sir, I beg you to excuse me. I have told only the truth, and I have told all. It is not for me to know what

has passed between you two. If she has wronged you, she certainly expiated that wrong during those terrible days, and you will have pity on her. You cannot but have pity on her."

The Father was silent, relieved, and yet scared by his own warm supplication. His task was accomplished, and all he now wished was to retire into the shade. Made for helping and saving others, this simple son of the mountains, whom no risk or danger could ever hold back, felt a great fear of emotional passages, and had shown more true courage and strength here, than upon the stones and ice of Mt. Velan. He begged the Prior to allow him to retire, and he was already on the threshold when Mark joined him.

"My good Father, said he, "allow me to clasp your hand."

"Oh, willingly, sir."

"I owe you her life."

"As soon as she could speak she called for you."

After Father Sonnier had left them, the Prior simply repeated:

"As soon as she could speak, she called for you."

Mark, in great distress, looked at the monk, who so naturally spread around him an atmosphere of peace and bowing to his mysterious power, he asked almost timidly:

"What ought I to do?"

"Forgive, forgive, not with the lips alone, but from the heart."

Mark drew himself up:

"Yes, forgive. You could give no other advice. What is all this to you? You do not understand, walled in here in your solitude, you cannot understand."

"Who told you that I do not understand?" replied the priest, still losing none of his contagious calmness.

"But to forgive, Father, is only a word. I should pardon her out of compassion and because of her sufferings. But afterwards? Afterwards, we should have to live, should have to forget. How could we forget, she and I, those awful days? Do you not see that their very tragedy must fix them imperishably in our memory? She is bound to the dead far more surely than by the rope which was not broken by their fall. She belongs to him, he keeps her. Had they been discovered there, forever joined in death's frozen embrace, they would have been cited as a couple of lovers. Because she survived him, is anything changed?"

"Everything is changed, my son, because she did survive him. Father Sonnier showed you that. After her temptation to commit suicide, she determined to live, and now you and her child are her life. Will you throw her back into that other and far worse death which is the rejection of a repentant soul? You speak of her illicit love as if it were something permitted, you seem to excuse her sin."

“I do not excuse it, but I acknowledged its power.”

“An evil power from which she is now freed.”

“Freed in the body. But as to her heart?”

“Her heart? The first word she uttered on her resurrection, was a cry for you. Is it for me to teach you that women are more submissive than men to life’s forces, and do not falsely confuse what *is* with what *has been*. God did not will that she should die. He has given her back to you. Will you reject her? Will you reject her because you love her?”

“How do you know that I love her?”

“How could I not know? I was watching you while Father Sonnier was telling his story.”

“Then it is because I do love her that I cannot take her back.”

He walked up and down in great agitation, then suddenly exclaimed:

“But I cannot leave her without seeing her; cost what it will I must see her.”

“What will you say to her?”

“I do not know what I shall say to her. I only know I must see her. Father, I beg you to take me to her. Take me to her now, yourself.”

The Prior scrutinised him comprehensively, as if to read his mind, and answered simply, “Come.”

“Here we are,” said the Prior, stopping before the door of a cell.

They had passed through the long passages of the immense building without a word. Now, motionless behind the priest, Mark tried to still the rapid beating of his heart: was it from walking too fast, or was it the dread of recalling the past? Father Dornaz added with gentle authority:

“Wait here a few moments until I prepare her.”

He knocked and entered, leaving the door slightly open, and after a few words concerning her health, and the certainty of recovery, Mark heard the Father say:

“You wanted to see your husband, Madame, he has come. He is here.”

A voice that he well knew repeated distinctly, yet as if frightened:

“He is here?”

“Yes, Madame. I have come from him. Shall I call him?” continued the Prior.

“Oh, not yet! not yet! Give me time to prepare!”

“He is waiting to come in.”

“Are you sure, Father? He wants to see me?”

“Certainly, since he has come. Take courage, my child. God will support you. God never forsakes those who rely on his help.”

There was silence, and then:

“You are right, Father. Then if he wishes to come, call him in. Wait a minute, give me your blessing.”

It was a murmur rather than a human voice, and

yet, through the half-open door, Mark had not lost a syllable. Even in her feebleness and alarm, the invalid kept her distinct articulation, only it was a bit husky and trembling. Other tones of that voice, the last that had fallen on his ears, pathetic and full of supplication, came back to his memory and mingled with these. Again he saw his wife at the door from which he had driven her. He saw her again in that clinging black velvet dress with the brown fur, which revealed her slender figure. She had just returned from a visit to her lover, with moist, blood red lips. And on the body of that lover, dead, up there in the snow, they had found her lying prone, bound to him, yes, bound to him forever. Hate and humiliation that he had believed subdued rose up within him in their first strength, merely at the sound of that living voice. And hardly knowing how, urged by he knew not what impulse, he took the few steps that separated him from her, and found himself in the room, at the foot of her bed. A Sister in charge was the first to see him, and went out, passing in front of him and closing the door behind her. The Prior, surprised at Mark's abrupt entrance, took a step forward, as if to stop him. But he had stopped of himself, his feet riveted to the floor, his eyes staring at the figure upon the bed. And it seemed as if between them lay an infinite desert of silence.

“My children,” said Father Dornaz at last, breaking the agonised silence, “God be with you.”

Then he, too, slowly moved away, and Mark and Thérèse were left alone together. Neither had yet spoken.

How often we imagine what is before us, and when it really happens we hardly recognise it, so different is it from the foreseen complications.

He was expecting to meet a vanquished enemy to whom he would dictate terms, and in the large white bed he saw a poor little face, wasted and worn, colorless, with parched lips, with nothing of the charm of former days. A bandage that covered her forehead and was tied behind her head did not hide that her hair, her beautiful fair hair, curling at the lightest breath, her magnificent hair of burnished gold that fell almost to her feet, had been cut short on account of the coagulated blood from her wounds. She was nothing but a pitiful little thing, a heap of bruised and suffering flesh, whose only trace of humanity seemed to have retreated to her eyes, her deep, dark imploring eyes, desperately imploring, full of terror.

Without realising precisely what feeling dominated him, he had brought with him the persistent rancour of wounded love and pride, in which forgiveness is either the solemn and scornful pardon that saves pride and has no need of love, or else that other form of forgiveness that is half physical feeling and desire, and subordinates the life of the soul to carnal instinct. He had brought all this with him, without reflection, like an unwinnowed harvest, and yet, here,

at this bedside, hardly knowing what he did, he fell on his knees saying only:

“My little Thérèse, how you must have suffered!”

Her eyes, those soft, dark, pleading eyes, filled with tears, that rained down her faded cheeks. She had not expected this, and it had the painful, but reviving strength of the drops of brandy that had been forced between her lips after her agony in the snow. “You . . .” she murmured, “thou? . . . thou here?”

He took the hand that lay helpless on the sheet.

“How should I not come? Thou wert calling for me.”

Irresolution, revulsion, were all forgotten. He was simply helping some one in great distress who had trusted herself to him. And he spoke gently, in low tones, as one speaks to an invalid who must not be agitated for fear of a return of fever. Rising from his knees he bent over her. And half reassured, desire for life reawakened, she again gave proof of that courage which she had already shown; it was she and not he who spoke of the past:

“Yes,” she said, “I did call thee. I called for thee because I was near death. I could not die like that, you know. But then I did not die. But it was not my fault that I did not.”

At the last words she tried to smile, a smile that only emphasised the ravages of her poor face. He had his answer ready:

“I was afraid during the journey here.”

"Afraid? . . . of what?"

"Of not finding you alive."

"Ah!"

She closed her eyes. Now she did indeed fear to go further. Hope made her tremble. The future that was before her, and of whose possibilities she caught a glimpse, held her in suspense. Still there was one name that rose to her lips, that she kept repeating in her heart, that she did not yet dare to speak aloud.

"Now," said Mark, "I know that your life is saved. But you must have perfect rest and quiet. You will see how we will nurse you, and everything will go well."

"Yes, you are kind."

And then Michael Monestier's advice recurring to his mind, he said almost involuntarily,

"I will arrange for both of you at Caux."

She was not sure that she understood, and timidly asked:

"Both of us?"

"To be sure; Juliette is here."

"Juliette!"

It was the mother's cry of deliverance, as if her child had been born again. She lifted to her lips her husband's hand which was holding her own.

"My dear . . . Mark . . . Then, you have really . . . forgiven me?"

"Hush!" he commanded in a tone so tender and yet so imperious that it surprised himself, as if he

had heard the voice of some one else, some one vested with the power of remission — with sacerdotal power.

He had withdrawn his hand, and now he placed his finger on her lips to enforce his order for silence: adding,

“Let us never speak of that again. Never, never.”

It was a final and sacred promise. He made it with no previous intention, with a strong leading from within that carried him on in spite of himself. It seemed to him as if he were obliterating all memory of the evil days. He had passed beyond the region of trouble and doubt, of uncertainty, disquietude of heart, and had attained the secret place of inward calm and serenity; as after a hard climb in which the difficulty of the last few steps is unnoticed because of the nearness of the summit, a man finds himself suddenly at the top, on a broad plateau where the air is lighter and more reviving than any ever breathed before. He was filled with a new joy, radiant, infinite, that thrilled through his whole being, uplifting him yet leaving him quite sane — a joy that quickened his sensations without shaking his nerves. It was the repose of cool running water, after the conflict of memory during that interminable journey, after the sadness of the evening before, when he had watched the last lighted window; after the horror of the morning, the cruel ordeal of the sad story. His first experience of love had not so

filled him with happiness; as a woman who hears with exultation the first cry of the child that she has borne in pain, so he felt the first thrill of the soul he had redeemed, and in this unforgettable moment he held cheap indeed all the preceding misery.

Of this peace which possessed and dilated his whole being, he felt sure that he would see the reflection in his wife's eyes. Bending over her, he saw only the poor ravaged face, without beauty or expression, for the lids were closed over her eyes. On this poor, expressionless face, no longer beautiful, he gazed with a peculiar delight; he longed to kiss those wounds; but when heart meets heart, caresses can add nothing to their bliss. After waiting a while, he began to wonder that her eyes remained closed,—then to fear that they might have closed forever.

“Thérèse!” he cried.

And then the eyes were opened, and he saw those large eyes, but a short time before so tragically sad, now peaceful in expression, as he had wished them to be. Without a phrase, a word, a gesture, their union was renewed on the farther side of love and death. And so all was well.

Still she neither moved nor spoke. He realised the violent shock to which in her weakness he had subjected her, and he felt that he needed her forgiveness, as if he had been cruel.

“How very tired you must be! Would you like me to leave you now and come back later? Or would

you like me to remain quietly near you in a corner of the room? ”

“ Oh, no, my dear, it is not fatigue. I cannot explain it to you . . . I am happy, I am so happy.”

He contented himself with laying his hand on her forehead above the bandage.

“ They have cut off your hair, your beautiful hair,” he said.

“ It was quite necessary.”

Turning over in his mind what would best please her, Mark asked:

“ Would you like me to bring Juliette? ”

“ Oh! yes, go for her . . . Juliette . . . It has been such a long time. . . . Has she grown? ”

And in a lower tone.

“ Does she still remember me? ”

“ She spoke of you only a little while ago.”

“ Did she? Does she know that I am here? ”

“ Not yet. I will go and tell her. She is probably near the little lake with Madame Acher, or near the kennels. She has always been fond of dogs.”

“ I know. Go quickly.”

“ Should I recall the Sister during my absence? ”

“ Oh! I do not need anything, now that you are here. Only to see my little girl.”

At the thought of her little girl she reached out her arms in longing. He saw her agitation.

“ A little patience, Thérèse, I'll soon be back with her.”

He left the room, and once in the passage he was surprised at the lightness of his step, the pleasure he found in mere walking and breathing. Joy carried him as on wings. It was as if he had leaped across life's boundaries, and found himself in a new country where the laws of gravity are different, and where reigns that happiness which is coveted by so many, and is as yet unknown by man. He had simply had to follow the leading of his heart to be freed from all bitterness, to realise a condition like that state of grace in which true believers feel themselves when in direct touch with God.

At the end of the passage he met Father Dornaz, who had remained within call, and who gave him a look that seemed to read his heart.

"You are leaving our invalid soon," he said, half smiling.

"She needs no one now; she is waiting for me to bring our little girl to her."

"That is right, go for her, my friend."

And the Father, withdrawing, let him pass.

The sun was shining again, inviting the tourists to walk. The hospice was nearly empty, and Mark found no one to show him the way Madame Acher and her young charge had taken. At a guess he chose the path towards the Italian side, that he had followed that morning. At the lakeside Juliette, under the eyes of her governess, was watching Father Sonnier's lesson to the dogs. There were five

or six russet and white coated canine pupils, with uplifted muzzles, attentive to the slightest motion of their teacher, who, with his monk's cap on his head, was explaining a difficult task. The surface of the lake, usually dark, was now overspread with spangles of light, heightening the clearness of the sky, bringing out the brilliant patches of snow that covered the rocky side of the circus-like enclosure, and making a charming setting for the lesson. The child found this open-air class a far more delightful manner of instruction than that of her schoolroom in the villa at La Murette. She was clinging with both hands to the largest of the dogs, who had probably already received his diploma, and so was excused from lessons. Her tiny fingers were quite lost in his thick coat. From time to time, she hugged his great head, and as Mark advanced he saw her stoop down (while Madame Acher was not looking), and imprint a kiss on the huge creature's muzzle. The dog did not draw away, stood motionless, let her do what she pleased with him, as with a defenceless creature, lest he might scare, by ever so slight a movement, his new little friend; but when her attention wandered and she relaxed her hold, the dog would come closer to her, would rub against her, as if asking for a caress.

After watching the pretty scene for an instant, Mark called his daughter, who protested:

"Oh! papa, the lesson is not yet finished."

But here Father Sonnier showed a perspicacity unexpected in one of his rough exterior and colossal frame, by calling his dogs together:

"We are going back to the kennels, Miss Juliette. It is time for these gentlemen to have their soup."

"So soon! Then I must kiss Barry once more."

"No one should kiss animals," observed Madame Acher, trying to prevent the little girl's demonstrations of affection.

But the child had already pressed her lips to the white spot between two brown patches, 'on the dog's forehead.

"I've done it anyway."

"Why did you not mind Madame Acher?" asked Mark, weakly.

She pointed to the dog, which was joining his brothers:

"Because he saved the lady's life."

"What lady?"

"The lady of the accident."

Thus, unconsciously the child had in her own way showed her gratitude for her mother's rescue. Mark led her quickly away, and while the governess followed her, short breathed, losing ground, and soon out of hearing of their lowered voices, he bent towards Juliette, so as to be quite near her and said:

"Do you want to see Mamma again?"

Perhaps he might have broken the news less abruptly to one so responsive and whose delicate sensibility yielded to the slightest touch, as a reed bends

before the wind. Already Mark was reproaching himself, but the child gave no sign of surprise, showed no emotion, but simply answered with a knowing air:

“I knew we should find her here.”

“Ah,” said Mark, in surprise. “What made you think so?”

“Oh! bringing me with you on such a long journey. And then Sylvia’s papa spoke of her to me. So I told Madame Acher what I thought about it.”

Then the eight year old imagination had been at work since the day before, putting things together, and had instinctively rushed to the truth! And loosing her hold of her father’s hand, as proud of having guessed right as joyful over the great event, Juliette turned triumphantly to the governess:

“Madame, Madame, mamma is here!”

She announced the good news as if crowned with an aureola of infallibility. Why not make the most of it?

Mark would rather have kept the secret to themselves for a little while, but poor Madame Acher, not at all prepared for it, hastened her steps, in the effort to join them. There was nothing for it but to explain.

Mark gave her a brief, somewhat vague, summary of the facts. Madame Romenay had been hurt in a mountain accident, her life was no longer in danger, and she longed to see her child. The old lady listened to it all with no pleasure. Though noth-

ing had been told her, she had guessed at what had happened to break up the married life of her employers, and after the departure of her mistress had doubled her zeal in caring for her master's household, and for the welfare of the child confined to her. Her position in the household, which had become more important, its duties heavier but also more brilliant, would now inevitably be reduced to a lower plane. She foresaw the lessening of her influence; what would be that of Madame Romenay, after the equivocal events of the past year? How could any one dare to confide to a person so irresponsible the education of an impressionable child? But men are so weak before the arts of any creature who appeals to their pity! All these thoughts rushed through her mind, like bees humming about her, and as she listened without enthusiasm to Mark's account, she found them formulated in Juliette's remark:

"Why, Madame, you do not seem very glad!"

"Indeed I am, but so surprised."

In spite of her age she blushed, for she was ashamed of her feelings. By way of expiation she tried to encourage Juliette:

"Go now to your mother, and be a good little girl; the least noise will tire her, you know."

"Won't you come too?" asked Juliette.

"Madame Acher will come later," interposed Mark. He drew away his daughter, who was not at

all averse to getting ahead of the governess. For a mamma is a mamma, and when you are little she belongs entirely to you: later, when you are bigger, is it not quite the same?

As they passed through the long halls of the hospice she lost her air of bravado. Her father, who had hold of her little hand, felt it tremble, and tried to calm her:

“Listen, go quietly and gently, I have much to tell you; mamma has been very ill.”

“Poor Mamma!”

“You will find her very much changed.”

“Oh! that makes no difference, no difference at all.”

“You will see: she will soon be quite well again. And I will take you both over to Caux to stay awhile.”

“Where Sylvia Monestier is?”

They had reached the door of the cell. Her father stopped.

“Is she here?” asked the child.

Mark had expected to go in first, to prepare Thérèse. But from the room a feeble voice called Juliette.

“Mamma!” cried the child.

And rushing like a spring of water she burst into the room. For a second, only, she hesitated, for the foot of the bed hid the invalid: but led by a second call, she flew over to the occupant, who had barely

escaped from death, with bound forehead, her scarred face unrecognisable, yet whom the child recognised by her voice.

“Mamma! mamma!”

Much the child cared whether her mother was beautiful or ugly, young or old, whole or wounded! It was so long that she had been parted from her, so long, that she had even thought that she no longer had a mother, that she would never again have one! And she had even — could it be possible! — been happy without her, had played and laughed without her, had become used to her absence! But now to find her! The child was lifted out of herself, blissful, yet fearful of something mysterious that had happened during her absence: her mamma was alive, but she might have been dead where no one could see her, and so forgotten. There passed through the mind of the child a mixture of feelings that filled her with happiness yet with somewhat of a mysterious confusion. Not understanding, not able to understand, she wept. Tears explain everything, make explanations unnecessary.

Mark, as he contemplated the interlaced forms, entered into their joy without claiming his share. Was it not all his doing? and now he had his reward. Nothing could change the peace in his heart. He was still living outside of the common life. No cloud rose on his clear horizon, and the happiness of others seemed enough for him. About the bed of

this invalid, but yesterday about to die, the scattered family was united again.

“Mark,” Thérèse said at last, putting her child from her, “how good you are to me!”

The child, somewhat overexcited, began to talk rapidly and incessantly, telling all sorts of unrelated things, mixing together her geography and history lessons, Sylvia Monestier, the Saint Bernard dogs, Napoleon and Madame Acher. Her father tried in vain to stop her, fearing to weary the convalescent.

“Let her talk,” said Thérèse, “I am thirsty for the sound of her voice, it seems as if I could drink it.”

But Juliette herself grew weary, and was sent back to Madame Acher. After she went out, silence followed her chatter. Mark and Thérèse, happy to be together again, found nothing to say, except a few insignificant remarks. Would not words inevitably bring up that past which they had blotted out? Here, face to face, they were afraid to speak. This embarrassment was the first token that the past could not be blotted out. At the moment it seemed to matter little. Still they regretted that the child was no longer with them, and when the Prior came in for his evening visit, they welcomed him as if his presence were a relief.

“Now,” said Father Dornaz with his persuasive tone, “it is time for conversation to stop. Madame will take some broth, and then rest. She has had

enough excitement for to-day. She needs to be alone."

No man, even when most in love, is anxious to remain longer than necessary by the bedside of the sick. Only a woman has the patience that never wearies. Mark yielded, unresisting, to the Prior's order. He touched with his lips that part of her forehead that was not covered by the bandage, wished his newly recovered wife good night, and went away. But he turned back at the door,—saw her large dark eyes following him, and their expression was so tender, that he stopped.

"My dear," murmured Thérèse, "is it possible?"

"Sleep peacefully until to-morrow," he answered.

"You will come again?"

"Of course I shall not leave you."

Outside the door Mark became pleasantly aware of the movement, the noise, the coming and going of travellers. They came from Aosta or Martigny, in carriages, on mule back, on foot. Father Clavandier was allotting their lodgings. The hospice was already in shadow, but the setting sun fired the snowy summits, as on the preceding evening. It was a gentle ending of the day, the pure air still giving promise of continued fine weather.

Among the different groups he saw his little girl walking about with as much ease, here at the Grand Saint Bernard, as in their little garden at La Muette. She had found the dog she most admired, Barry, who seemed to recognise her from the first as a

friend, and was showering caresses upon him. "You know that Madame Acher told you not to kiss the dog!" he said.

She answered with unheard-of audacity, defying displeasure, fearlessly disobedient, proclaiming,

"Oh! I don't mind that, I am going to kiss him, anyway."

"Juliette!" he commanded.

"He saved mamma's life."

All by herself she had come to this conclusion; the story of the accident had struck her as relating to her mother's changed appearance; and her faith and love made her father respect her wishes in spite of himself.

"But you should mind your governess."

"She is not here to see."

Both of them laughed at their complicity. The excited child had a surplus of affection to expend, and since Barry put up his great head . . .

As they were going in to dinner, Mark overheard the conversation of two guides who had come up from the valley. They were speaking of the funeral service of the victim of the mountain, which seemed to have taken place that morning, at Martigny.

"After mass," said one of them, "they carried the corpse to the station."

And Mark, remembering the dead, lost his confidence, and his new happiness.

VI

ThÉRÈSE's wounds healed with wonderful rapidity. Her rich and healthy blood aided her young organisation to recovery. The fever which at first had threatened her life soon ceded to watchful care. Appetite and strength returned. Soon she would be able to leave the hospice.

Mark had watched over the rapid cure, with feelings which he did not care to analyse. The triumphant youth which by degrees restored the outline and colour of that dear face brought to him only a half-hearted joy. He would have been satisfied with the beauty of those dark eyes that had expressed so much gratitude and confidence, but the sight of that short hair where once had been the golden mass of former days always gave him the same discomfort that he had felt at first. And now the invalid, leaving her bed, was resuming the acts and habits of every-day life.

With Juliette, the present had so completely been merged into one with the past, before the break of the mother's absence, that the joining would soon be hidden from her memory. But how would it be with Mark? Both he and Thérèse tried too hard

to be natural, for entire success. With each new day they sought with one accord for a way to draw nearer to one another. But the newness of each new day is made up of comparison of what is with what has been.

Where should he take the convalescent? For he could not continue much longer to take advantage of the hospitality of the monks of St. Bernard. He decided on Caux, high above Montreux and Lake Lemman. That strong still air would complete his wife's cure and the high altitude had been recommended for his child's health.

"You will find it very comfortable," he assured Thérèse while speaking of their future plans.

"And what shall you do?"

"I shall go with you."

But as the plan took form, he explained one day with some reserve, that he would come and go between Caux and Paris.

"It is a long journey."

"Nothing is long now-a-days."

She dropped the subject. She never disagreed with him in any way now. Formerly she would have argued, insisted prettily on having her way. Now she no longer dared to do so. Did he not understand the reason?

He went first to make arrangements for their reception; she was to follow with Juliette and the governess.

The physician pronounced her strong enough,

now, to bear the long drive from the Grand Saint Bernard to Martigny.

"She has much endurance and there is no internal injury," he had said.

Furthermore the trip is far from tiresome: there is a funicular railway that climbs the hillside from Montreaux to the Caux station.

When Mark called on the Prior to tell him of their approaching departure and thank him for the devoted care that had been given his wife, he begged that Father Sonnier might be allowed to accompany him.

"I wish to pass the night at the Refuge, or at the Proz Cantine, and to-morrow climb to the place where the accident occurred. Father Sonnier will guide me."

"Why do you make that pilgrimage? It is better not to look back."

"My good father, I have made a promise to myself to go over that path. I have made all preparations, and have been in training for it the past few days. If I take a regular guide his talk and the stories that he will tell me, as stranger to whom all is unknown, will be more than I can bear. With Father Sonnier I shall be sure of silence. I beg you to permit him to go with me."

In the face of these alternatives the Prior yielded. But he added in a serious tone:

"Take care, my friend. You are at the beginning of a new life. I approve of and admire what

you have done. But never forget that it is not we who have the power to remit sin."

"I have forgiven. That is all past," interrupted Mark, wishing to cut short the interview.

But the monk, to his great surprise, replied:

"You are mistaken. Forgiveness proceeds from what is divine in us. True forgiveness comes from God alone. Ponder on this sometimes. There is no ending of anything but in Him."

Long afterward Mark had cause to remember this warning.

After sending forward his luggage by the post, he left that afternoon, almost happy, on foot with Father Sonnier, Barry bounding ahead of them. Only the monk perfectly understood his plan. But Juliette had a suspicion that they were making an expedition, and wanted to go with them, especially since the dog, her new playmate was going along, and she imagined all sorts of perilous adventures:

"Papa, please take me with you. Last year I learned to take long walks. And besides, if I fall into the snow Barry will rescue me also."

She was longing to play a tragic part, that she might overwhelm her little friends with a story of wonderful adventures. What a picture she could give! You would disappear in a crevasse, and a dog would pull you out of it; you would be wrapped warmly in a rug, would be given drink and food. That is more exciting and interesting, than to be hit by an automobile or to fall from a bicycle!

"Mamma needs you to take care of her," the father reminded her.

"That is so."

It was quite evident that her mother, who could barely drag herself across her room, really did need her. She had not the least doubt of her usefulness.

All the same a tramp over the mountains was very tempting. Thus Juliette was torn by contrary desires.

As he went down the path leading from the hospice, Mark suddenly turned and stopped. He wished to embrace in one last look this wild landscape, its ruinlike rocks encircling the dwelling of peace. He bade adieu to the hospice, with its porch and its high windows,—that window that he had watched one night with its single light amid the darkness. There all strangers and travellers would find help and rest. There, in the great catastrophe of his life, he had been welcomed and comforted. What the future had in store for him he did not know. But it was there that he had experienced his hour of greatest exaltation, the highest point of all hours of his life, had an hour lifted above them all, as on the high summit of a mountain chain, when, his manhood's pride all bitterness, and his memories all hatred, he had knelt beside the bed where lay the poor sinner in her pain, and could only say to her: "*My little Thérèse, how you must have suffered!*"

"We shall see it again," Father Sonnier assured

him, for he understood the meaning of his gaze. "From Velan side we overlook this pass."

So they continued on their way. They hardly spoke during the walk. Instead of choosing the Proz Cantine for their night's shelter the monk preferred to lead Mark to the chalets of the Plan-du-Jeu. It is a group of two or three little cabins of rough boards at the edge of a ravine. The shepherds who keep their flocks on the neighbouring grassy hill-sides take shelter in them. But they often prefer other cantonments, and these huts are apt to be vacant. The two travellers found no one there when they arrived at the close of the day. They took possession of the most habitable of the huts, and Father Sonnier without loss of time began to get their beds ready and prepare for supper. A little straw under their travelling rugs served for beds, and their knapsacks contained the necessary food. He took out a small alcohol lamp, which he lighted, and a can which he filled with water and put on to heat, and a little later poured it over a capsule of concentrated soup; then followed slices of ham, bread and fruit, and a bottle of wine.

"We keep what is left for to-morrow," he said, fastening the knapsack.

Mark watched him as he went about absorbed in his preparations and with the perfect content of those who trust to active service to drive away useless and unwholesome thoughts. Martha's part, as

described in the Gospel, promises inward security, but demands forgetfulness of self.

This meal in a forgotten corner, above a torrent, far from any village, with the evening quiet surrounding them, brought to Mark a refreshing joy. His companion's presence soothed him as old and tried warriors encourage young recruits. And was not this the eve of a battle? From time to time, he tried to make out Mount Velan, which, however, was hidden by the lesser chains of hills between them. To-morrow he would meet the giant. But he did not dwell upon the dangers of crevasses and rolling stones. It was a departed spirit that he wished to summon up.

Little by little the spirit of the night, mysterious and sure, overtook them, enveloped them, and passed on beyond. On the mountain height, one sees that darkness rises from the earth, and not from the sky, from below, not from above. The valleys are the first to fall under its sway and along all their boundaries, whether slowly or rapidly, the shadows rise like a stealthy army. For a time the summits are still victorious, the brilliant colours of the snow become still more vivid at sunset, resplendent, as if the day would never end. Then the light wavers, and suddenly night is over all.

"Let us go to bed," said Father Sonnier when his pipe was out.

"Not so soon," begged Mark.

"I must awaken you to-morrow at three in the

morning. We must climb the mountain before the heat comes on. A good night's sleep is a good preparation. You had better come along."

"I am not a bit sleepy."

"Good night, then."

And the monk rose from the sward where he had been seated, to enter their barrack. Mark did not move from his seat. He might have guessed that his comrade had left him, if only by the uneasiness that invaded him as he sat alone outside. Was the presence of the monk necessary to keep peace in his heart?

It was the hour of stars on the mountain. Here they do not seem so far off as over the plain or the sea. In the limited space between sky and mountain top they seem more friendly, almost more human. They smile, they invite to repose, to calm. They are like flowers in the solitude of the great silence that nothing disturbs, not even the monotonous song of the torrent falling over the rocks. They give mysterious, pure caresses to eyes that gaze long on them. And while elsewhere they are so numerous that the eye loses count of them, and they evoke, in the thought of other worlds far beyond their luminous groups, our craving for the infinite, our yearning to know and understand things beyond us; in the nearer distance of this narrow sky, framed about with mountain peaks, they seem to put away all confusion, separation and doubt from our thoughts, and restore to them the fervour of a simple emotion.

They are content to say that God is there. Starlit nights on the mountain are filled with religious fervour.

For a long time Mark remained quietly gazing, neglectful of the growing chill in the air, yielding himself to the serenity of the night. The lozenge-shaped constellation of the Swan, like a great bird of which the body and the spread of the wings are equal, attracted him, because *she* had pointed it out to him from the Riffelalp. Turning in the direction of the hospice, he dedicated to her who had been restored to him the newly found sweetness of his love. And now it began to appear to him that the pilgrimage on which he was bound was nothing but treason to that love. When one has forgiven, he has no longer a right to demand new sensations from the obliterated past. Was he indeed destroying with his own hands that house of happiness which he had tried to repair? He felt like rising and calling to Father Sonnier, "Awake, let us leave this, what have we come here for? Let us not arouse the remembrance of what we should forget." And yet he did not stir. That eternal uncertainty which is at the foundation of human love constrained him to this dangerous journey. And all the immense peace of the stars no longer sufficed to fill his heart.

He was in a deep sleep when Father Sonnier shook him. The clear cold air outside the cabin renewed his energy and his fierce desire for this under-

taking. It was still night, but the stars were fewer in number, and over the edge of the mountain circle a small crescent moon was slowly dropping like a thin, trembling blade. No light warned of approaching day, and yet all space seemed to be awaiting it.

As the two companions reached the moraine of the Proz glacier, Mount Velan stood out from the darkness, like an adversary, with its dizzy steep and formidable abutments, like a fortress to be taken by assault. While the monk was unwinding the rope he had brought with him, fastening one of its ends about Mark Romenay's breast, the latter, turning around, could not restrain an exclamation of surprise. The first rays of the morning had begun to tint the mountain chain of Mount Blanc. The virgin snow took on a rosy tint, the colour of peach blossoms in early spring, and the shaded outlines of domes and cupolas had that silky evenness of texture in their rounded forms, that is the beauty of woman. Under this morning light the landscape awoke like flesh in which life is coursing. But this attractive power of the mountains, so dangerously subtle that no one ever escapes who has once come under its sway, was repulsive to Mark. Jealousy awoke anew. "*They* yielded to it, here, together. . . ."

Following his guide who advanced slowly along the arête,—the arête that the rescue party had had to descend carrying its victim, he realised better the immense courage, skill and endurance involved

in life-saving in the mountains. Already several hours had passed in making the ascent. Mark struggled against growing fatigue: sometimes his breath failed, and he was obliged to pull the rope, as a sign to go more slowly.

Father Sonnier seemed to be looking over the ground with care and also with some surprise.

"It ought to be there," he said, at last. "But since the accident there has been a fall of snow that has covered over the traces; there are no longer any landmarks. I do not see the narrow ledge that caught them in their fall. If you only knew how hard it is to find any place in the mountains when covered with snow! It so quickly covers up the footprints."

Mark looked and saw only a uniform slope.

"I am sure I am not mistaken," said the monk; "look over there: that blue shadow in the snow shows that there must be a projecting rock underneath."

And he added, as his fighting instinct took hold of him: "The wall here is almost vertical. It was a miracle that caused them to strike that ledge."

"I want to climb down there," said Mark, fascinated by the sight of the barely visible shelf.

"Impossible! We have not enough rope; besides it would be running into needless danger."

"But you went down?"

"To rescue a wounded person, to bury the dead

in consecrated ground: that is a different thing. But simply for a — whim, no, a thousand times no.”

Mark could not dream of attempting the perilous feat alone. There was nothing to do but to leave the place. Was this defeat what he had come so far to seek? The fatigue caused by physical effort for the moment paralysed the imagination that longed to reconstruct the events that had taken place on that steep mountain side.

“Do you want to climb up to the summit of the Velan?” asked Father Sonnier. “It is not very far from here, and the view is very extensive. We can descend afterwards by way of the Valsorey glacier to Bourg-Saint-Pierre.

He sang the praises of his mountain, as if addressing a tourist.

“No,” answered Mark, “I want to remain here a while.”

And then as if begging for a favour:

“Might I remain here alone for a few minutes, Father?”

His guide, who felt responsible, thoughtfully measured the difficulty, then consented to a brief separation.

“Wait, I will untie the rope, and then I will go down the path for a few yards; a little lower down there is a sort of cornice that is a good place to take breakfast. I will get our provisions ready, and you can join me there, but be very careful to watch

out for good footing. Before I go take a good drink."

He untied the rope that held them together, gave him a little rum and left him.

Mark watched him walk away, and when a rock had hidden the monk from his sight, he summoned suffering to meet him. It obeyed; it is always prompt in coming, even without being beckoned. During the reign of forgiveness it had disappeared, but now there was only he and it, alone, in this vast solitude of the mountain.

The sun's rays fell hot on the snow. The ether about the peaks vibrated with heat. At times a wind seemed to pass by, like a fast-moving wild creature. Down below, the sole vestige of human life, stood the hospice, like an eagle's nest, hardly distinguishable from the rocky walls that surround it.

From the place where he now sat, the rescuing band had first caught sight of the two victims, *her* and *him*, the man lying prone, already rigid in death, the woman kneeling, her arms uplifted as if in supplication, her mouth distorted with the efforts of a voice that had become so weak that she could no longer hear her own cries. Down there on that narrow shelf of rock, barely marked now by a mere shadow under the snow, they had lived through the last three days of their love. No; the snow had covered nothing; they were there, still; he saw them.

Why had she not died with him? had she not pro-

posed it? Why that strange refusal, that weakness? In the eternal night they might have joined those happy couples who represent all human felicity, because death has only the more definitively fixed their love. Lovers, joined in one tomb,—nothing can diminish aught of their ideal felicity.

Thus, even in the despair which filled his entire world and reached out to the four corners of the sky, Mark felt the necessity of magnifying the perfect love of those two, as if they had been heroes of legend. In his morbid desire to drink to the dregs his cup of woe, he put away from him the remembrance of Thérèse who could have forgotten it all, her wish to begin anew a life that now seemed impossible,—Thérèse, whom he had never loved so dearly as at this moment. How could she dare forget those hours she had spent down there, watching *him, him*, dying—dead?

Yes, one can forgive, can restore a child to its mother—one can do such things as these. But one can never reconquer what Love had made his own.

When he returned to Father Sonnier, who had already set out their breakfast, the latter seemed greatly relieved.

“Hurry, hurry, you must be hungry.”

“No, I am not,” Mark protested.

But in spite of his words he ate and drank ravenously, for he had suffered much on the glacier.

“Love alone speaks in this silence,” had been his

bitter conclusion, while he was alone. As if replying to his thought, the monk, happy in the hour, the food, and the splendour around them, expressed his feelings in the simple words:

“Let me tell you; here a man begins to understand life.”

BOOK II

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

I

As soon as she was apprised of her son's return to Paris the elder Madame Romenay hastened to the house in the rue de Franqueville. Without allowing the servant to announce her, she went into his study. Mark, seated at his desk, was busy opening letters. The table was littered with an accumulation of unclassified matter, which apparently he had not had time, or was too weary, to reduce to the methodical order to which he had vainly sought to subject his thoughts and actions. On seeing his visitor, he started as if surprised in a wrong action, and his first movement was to cram into a drawer the letters he was reading.

"I learned that you had returned, my dear," said his mother timidly, fearing to seem importunate, "so I came."

Mark looked long into his mother's sweet face, softened by her white hair, as if he would fain have acquired some of its peace, the infinite peace of evening, after duty-filled days. Would not her dear presence bring him help in the disorder which had suddenly followed the dizzy hours in which he had been conscious neither of his heart nor of his reason,

as if walking on the heights without caring whether or not his feet were on solid ground.

"Mamma," he exclaimed. The word sounded like the plaintive call of a child.

But after this first outburst, he composed himself. Not even to her could he open his troubled heart. She was obliged to question him:

"Your letter from Saint Bernard was so very short, it told me nothing. She . . . she will live, will she not?"

She seemed so full of emotion, that he could not refrain from saying,

"Were you so very fond of her?"

Under his breath he added: "*you too!*" but these last words did not pass his lips.

A slight blush suffused the pale cheeks of Madame Romenay, more than is usual to see at her age, in one of such delicate health.

"She had become my daughter. Indeed, I loved her."

"Yes, she knew how to make every one love her; — but now?"

"Now, since you have forgiven her, I love her as before."

He made a sign of uncertainty as if to say that he hardly knew whether he had surely forgiven or not, adding:

"But you, you are a saint."

More impetuously than the filial words of praise justified, she protested:

"No, indeed no. Ah if you knew! . . ."

He checked her modest protest, and told her what she had come to learn. Thérèse, rescued from death, had been able to endure, without too much fatigue, the journey from the hospice to Caux. There he had comfortably installed her with Juliette and Madame Acher. It was a large modern hotel, where they could easily be private. Groves of pines surrounded it. The Rocks of Naye overlooked the place. Lake Lemane a few hundred metres below was visible from the terraced grounds of the hotel. From her balcony the convalescent could enjoy the hourly changes of the sunlight. The child would gain strength in the health-giving mountain air, which had been ordered for her. Thus mother and child would spend the summer under the finest auspices.

"How about yourself?" she asked when he had finished.

"Oh, as for me, I shall remain here, in Paris."

"Even during the hot weather?"

"Yes, even during the hot weather. You see how comfortable it is here: it is not worth the trouble of looking for a country home when a man has a house like this."

He pointed toward the open bay window through which could be seen La Muette park, its heavy foliage hanging over the iron grating and shading the street. Back of these, a vista through the woods, long green undulations as far as the eye could see.

Here and there, a house was half revealed like an island in the greenery. August, in this privileged corner of Paris, still kept somewhat of the light tones of spring.

"You have never spent August and September here before," observed Mme. Romenay.

"Very true. It will be a new experience. . . . From time to time I'll pay them a visit to make sure that all is going on well; just the time between two trains, nothing could be easier."

"Between two trains?"

"Yes. If I take the Simplon night express in the evening, I shall arrive at Caux some time before breakfast the following morning, and I can leave that same night and be in Paris the morning after."

"That is a foolish plan. Why not stay a while with her and rest?"

Mark evaded all reply, as if he never needed rest. He was full of new plans for enlarging his business, confiding them to his mother to protect his pride and hide his sorrow. It was not a successful move. She understood him only too well.

"But you, mother, you might go to them . . . if you feel no repugnance to . . . to seeing Thérèse again."

"Oh! Mark!"

"It would be better for Juliette."

"No, no, I want to remain near you."

"Thank you, mother; but this solitude suits me."

Thus with a word he drew away from her; and

there was silence between them, one of those silences in which conversation seems to go on without words. She attempted to reach out to him in this suffering which still evaded her.

“And afterwards?” she asked.

“Afterwards?”

“Yes. When the stormy season comes on, shall you not bring Thérèse back to Paris?”

“I have not looked so far ahead as that. Yes, perhaps; yes, no doubt, unless her health requires another climate to finish her cure. You know that I shall be absent from Paris all winter?”

“You? going away?”

“Yes. I must go to Russia. A whole new quarter of Saint Petersburg is to be built. I am to have an office there on the spot where I can make my plans and elevations. I have had amazing offers,—such offers as cannot be refused. Did I not tell you about it?”

“Yes, you did, last month, but then you thought best to refuse on Juliette’s account.”

“I have changed my mind since.”

“Do you take your wife with you?”

“I could not take her with me. The winter there would be too bleak for her. If she returns here I shall ask you to come and live in the house with her. Your reputation will be a safeguard to her on her return home, and this home-coming, without me, will prepare for our reconciliation in the eyes of the world. Yes, that will be best.”

His mother did not approve of this plan, but he warded off her objections by beginning on another subject.

"Did the newspapers say anything about the accident on Mount Velan? Did they mention the names of the victims or give initials only?"

She tried to evade the reply:

"I do not know, I read the newspapers so little."

But she was a stranger to dissimulation. He was looking for something on the table among his scattered papers, while she murmured:

"What is the use, Mark, I beg of you?"

"After the duel someone sent me clippings marked with blue or red pencil. They will not have spared me this time either. No one is spared now-a-days, no one at all known, not even those who are already down and have only to be made an end of. . . . Here: this is one . . . perfidious allusions such as a man has no right to take to himself, which he cannot take to himself without making himself ridiculous. Cowards!" Wearily rather than indignantly, he pushed the clippings away, adding in his most scornful tone, the tone he used when asserting his will, or when he wished to be let alone:

"When a man has suffered to a certain degree he treats such things with indifference. As for other people's opinions, I care nothing for them."

Then, returning to his former proposal:

"Mother, would you consent to spend the winter here with Thérèse and Juliette?"

Instead of replying, Madame Romenay drew nearer and took a chair by her son's side. Though he intimidated her, she so sorely felt his distress of mind that she would have brushed away any impediment in order to help him.

"Mark, my dear Mark, do you remember when you were a little fellow? If you were hurt or ill, I was there to help you."

"Not always, mother."

"Oh! Mark. Not always?" she asked, surprised and a little shocked.

"No, not at the beginning. You had too fine clothes on and too much powder. You used to hold me off when I tried to come too near. And then, all at once, neither fine dresses nor powder mattered, I was the only thing you cared for, mamma, I remember well."

He was not looking at her, or he would have noticed that she coloured.

"What a good memory you have! Well then, tell me your trouble as you used to do."

He still hardened himself against consolation from this poor woman who offered him her mother heart.

"I have no trouble. You are mistaken."

She insisted, though trembling somewhat, yet more gently, too.

"Mark, my dear son, I do not understand what has happened."

"You could not understand it."

"I thought your happiness had returned, that you had truly forgiven all."

He replied shortly, almost roughly:

"Yes, I have forgiven. And what then? What does it signify? It is not a question of forgiving, but of how to live together."

His mother was seated close to him and with a natural impulse he bowed his head on her breast, the breast that had nourished him in infancy:

"Mamma, if you could only know!"

"My boy!" she murmured, folding him in her arms.

And mother and son remained for some moments in loving embrace. The strong man's agony which for days like a restless wave had been seeking its home had at last found its resting place.

He lost himself in this sense of perfect repose, as on the arête of the Velan he had forgotten himself in the wine and bread brought by Father Sonnier; then half raising his head, as if about to confide in her, he stopped again, saying:

"No, no, you will never be able to understand."

"How do you know that, Mark? Does not a mother always understand?"

For a moment he sought where to begin his story and then decided:

"Before leaving home I had reread her letter, the one in which she spoke of the child. For that reason I took Juliette with me. Up there, as soon as we arrived, they told me that they hoped to save her, but

I could not see her immediately. I was expecting to find a dying woman. It would have been better for me, truly, had she died."

"Oh! Mark, but for her? and for Juliette? and even for yourself, later?"

"If you had seen her, mother, with her bandages, her poor face all wounds and pain, and her short hair — you know, they had to cut off her magnificent hair! — What could I do?"

"Forgive her, of course. Did you not do that?"

"Oh! if it had been only a question of forgiveness! I felt all at once how frightfully she had suffered out there on the mountain, I longed to gather her up, to comfort and cure her, to mend her like a toy that has been broken. There in her bed she looked such a little suffering thing! I was happy, I was full of joy that she was there, alive, and that I was able to make her happy."

"You see!"

"But wait. I loved her — how shall I tell you? I loved, not as one usually loves: Love has always seemed to me a mixture of what is best and worst in us, the greatest devotion, and the worst selfishness; but in my love then there was only the best that was in me. It was as if a miracle had taken place within me. It was divine."

"You see, Mark. Happiness has returned to you."

"Only wait. I knew what peace was. It was too wonderful, too beautiful to last. Ah! in the tale of

the accident there had been awful details, and little by little, they came back to my memory. When the monks came to their aid, he was dead, she was lying prone on the corpse. They were like one person: do you understand? *They were like one person.* I see them always like that."

And raising himself up, he seemed to be gazing at the atrocious vision. His mother tried to calm him, to soothe and divert his mind:

"That is all past. That is dead. Don't look backward, Mark, I entreat you."

"And I went and visited the scene of their agony."

"Why did you do that?"

"That I might remember it better — suffer more."

"Ah, Mark, one should never invite suffering. It is wrong. Why torture her, make her live her remorse over again?"

"I have not tortured her, mother. Do you know me so little? We have never spoken of the past. We never shall speak of it. I have forbidden her to do so."

"Never? You could do that? Yes, that is best — much best."

"But we have not been able to blot it out. At least, I cannot. As for her, I do not know — But she — how can she forget?"

"One abandons one's sins, Mark."

"I have come to wonder if it was a sin. I have the feeling that she belongs forever to him, that I

have profaned a sacred tomb — their love. I have not kissed her. I simply touched her bandaged forehead with my lips — once. She is no longer beautiful: her hair has been cut off. I love her thus. Some day, very soon, she will recover the beauty of former days. Then, oh, then, how will it be with us? You see, it is impossible. But no, mamma, you cannot understand. You ought not to be mixed up in these miseries. Yes, you — you are a saint. You cannot understand the things that agitate us. How could you understand all the dark things that inhere in love? ”

Pierced to the heart with his distress, Mme Romenay rose, took her son's head in her hands as he sat before her, as if to prevent his seeing her, and softly whispered,

“ You are mistaken about me, Mark — I assure you that you are mistaken.”

He could not see her, but the aged woman's voice was so changed that for a moment he felt stunned into silence, then, freeing himself from the restraint of her hands, he stood upright before her, filled with strange excitement.

“ Ah, no, mamma, not that, not that! I have all I can bear with the other. I shall never forgive her, never, if because of her I lose my faith in you.”

She did not flinch before the storm.

“ What are you thinking, Mark? ”

“ I ought to think nothing, ought I not, mamma? You were going to push your charity for Thérèse so

far as to accuse yourself — you! I felt it in your voice. But you could not — It was absurd. I blush now for the suspicion that flashed across me.”

For a few moments she hid her face in her hands, and he appreciated all the gravity of her act and her silence; but when she let fall her hands he saw again the serene peace of those dear frank eyes that he loved. She said simply,

“Listen to me.”

Again he rebelled.

“I do not want to listen.”

And to reduce her to silence, cut short a confession which he felt sure could only be a sacrifice of herself, he used, he dared to use, the precise word, the brutal word, which he felt sure would make her recoil.

“Never, never! You are spotless. You have never been any one’s mistress. No more of this, I entreat you.”

She did indeed recoil in spite of herself, horrified by the word which she had not anticipated.

“Oh, Mark, never! I assure you, never!”

But her delayed protest produced an unexpected result. Mark at once applied it to his own tragedy.

“You see! You are indignant at the mere idea. And your indignation is Thérèse’s condemnation. There is an abyss between her and you that nothing can fill. Did I not say that you could not understand?”

“My God, my God! inspire me!” she prayed.

“He will not listen to me and he does not know that if he absolves me he may well absolve his wife also.”

Thus praying, she turned to him.

“A little while ago you hurt me much, without meaning it; I was recalling your childhood, and you remembered that I kept you at a distance when you were little. It is true: I was not always a good mother.”

“Oh, mamma!”

“When one is young — do you see? — one demands too much happiness, one never has enough.”

“No, no, you were very unhappy; I know that. Ah, if you needed excuses! But you needed none. My father —”

“Don’t let us speak of your father. His weakness, even, is no excuse. One is not freed from one’s vow. I have no wish to diminish, make light of, my wrong doing.”

She spoke of herself as if she had been a criminal. Her conscience magnified the wound her wrong doing had inflicted upon her heart.

While Philibert Romenay, the fashionable architect, organiser of all the public festivals, all the art exhibits, was triumphantly boasting of his conquests to all Paris, and not satisfied with neglecting her, mocked at her in public, a young man connected with the family had come to love her for her premature melancholy, her manner as of a young girl who may not dance because she is in mourning, for all her

lovely childlike ardor, too early and without reason crushed. With infinite precaution, as if he feared to wound those pure eyes, that evident candour, he had accustomed her to his presence, his sympathy, a sort of complicity in interests, tastes, preferences, and by degrees indirectly, then one day openly, he had spoken to her of love. Neither on that day nor any other had she met him with the slightest avowal. She simply listened, smiled, believed, and when he spoke of going detained him. She hoped that he would be content with these sentimental relations. She thought that fondness needs nothing more. She did not know that if love does not increase it diminishes. And then — then her adorer married. If he had told her of it in advance, her surprise, her sadness, would perhaps have betrayed her. But no one has the patience to fathom a too delicate heart: in these days no one has the time. For a long time she had been unable to forget him. It had needed years, and the friendship of God, and maternal affection, to restore her to calmness. Yes, in thought she had given herself to him, and when thought has yielded, what signifies the consent of the flesh? This fear that she had had of herself, that mute passion which she had over-lived, had all unconsciously to herself transformed and protected her. She who knows her own frailty can never condemn love without understanding it. . . .

In timid words which shielded her husband, condemned only herself, and how awkwardly! — she told

her son the story of her temptation. Thus she had preceded Thérèse in the path of error and had been ransomed at far less a price. She sought to humiliate herself, abase herself, before her who was absent, and with so much of unstudied nobility, that her son took her in his arms.

“Dear mother, don’t accuse yourself any more. You do not even see that all that you say acts against your purpose. You were the most seductive of women — look at your portrait, there before you — and most unjustly unhappy. You were brought face to face with a hot trial and came off triumphant. And you are determined to make yourself out guilty.”

“Evil is in us.”

“There is no trace of it in you. For all that you have revealed to me, for the pity, the gracious tenderness which you showed in revealing it to me, I ought to go on my knees before you, mother.”

“Do not speak so.”

“You were taking Thérèse by the hand to bring her back here to me.”

“Will you not let her come?”

“Oh! my house is hers: but I shall always be looking for her love for *him*, now.”

“Ah, Mark, you think more of her fault than she does.”

“I think only of her love.”

Turning toward the table he added with intense excitement;

“She is so full of youth. Just now, when you

came, I was reading over her letters. I had not sense enough to keep her mine. Speaking of André Norans after our duel she said that his death would not have separated us so much as his life. Dead or living, he keeps her."

Again he repeated,

"Yes, I am thinking only of their love."

"But she," said Mme Romenay, "are you sure that in her absence she was not thinking of you, of her daughter, her home, much more than of her love? Distance transforms passions to us. Near at hand, they do not give the happiness that we imagine. Yes, we easily deceive ourselves about them. To a woman, nothing is worth so much as an ordered life and the peace of home. They do not know it at first, they are weak, they are pursued, but believe me, it is so."

And finding in her mother-heart that which the Prior of Saint Bernard found in faith and the knowledge of men, she added,

"Have you not told me of your joy in finding Thérèse alive? Mark, you must, you must pass beyond the evil love they had for one another. You must bestow a better love upon the poor child who has treated you so ill, love her with all that is best in yourself. To what purpose is suffering if not to make us better and nobler? Learn to make use of yours. Listen to God within you."

Struck by her words he seemed to hesitate, seek for a direction, then, discouraged, he whispered,

"I am only a man. I shall never be able."

"Try! Forgiveness lays a heavier obligation upon him who forgives than upon the guilty one. Otherwise, it would very soon abase them both, instead of lifting them up. At least I think so, Mark. I do not know much about it."

By this reservation she meant to suppress all allusion to her own past. She who had so often forgiven now put aside her personal case, though but now she had offered it as a sacrifice. Again he waited a little before replying; then he said:

"I will try. It would be salvation — yes, surpass them, surpass their love."

Pride would sustain him. In this struggle he would make appeal to pride. Had he not always been able to count upon himself not to give way to weakness?

When his mother, believing him calmed, had quitted him, full of hope — his mother who had come to accuse herself, lower herself, to ransom Thérèse, and whom he saw depart with a new tenderness, — as he was returning to his occupations, looking over his neglected mail, by way of again taking up the life which henceforth he would try to accept, he was surprised to find a letter from Mme Norans, asking for an interview.

II

RE-READING the letters written to Thérèse by her lover was a strange preparation for a visit from Mme Norans.

Those letters, which had long kept Mark Romenay's hate hot, though his sense of honour had never permitted him to read them without inward shame — shame over which hatred was not always victorious, and which more than once had impelled him to throw the stolen witnesses into the bottom of a drawer — now had for him a different attraction. He was no longer breathing out vengeance against the couple who had blasted his home. Why be unjust to them? When, before the reconciliation at Saint Bernard, he had pronounced an absolute condemnation of his wife, had he not struck a blow at his own heart, and even more, at all his past? No, he had not loved an unworthy creature. He had not been deceived in her whom he had met that luminous summer day in a chestnut avenue before an old mansion, above a lake; he had been separated from her by a power which he understood the better now that he had learned to respect that dead man whose courage Father Sonnier had not feared to

praise in his presence, at the hospice, and whose attractions he too, still braver, was now willing to acknowledge.

His letters were full of youth, not of that first youth, awkward and artlessly absurd, the slave of imagination and romance, impelled to exaggeration, and striking false notes with its amorous hyperboles. With a few added years the young man is not so anxious to transform the world, for he understands it better, and has discovered the heart's infinite capacity for joy and sorrow, those twin sisters, ever ready to strengthen each other. He still keeps his fresh enthusiasm, but his better sense bends it to self-analysis, or to the search for more effective, because more direct, modes of self-expression.

Thus André Norans had come to explain to him Thérèse's heart, torn by its conflict. Mark, himself, had never taken the trouble to fathom her indefinable charm, whether because his conquest had been too rapid and easy — the young girl to whom coquetry was unknown had been so astonished at his offer, and in her emotion had so spontaneously promised herself to him — or whether, being of an active race, he had never felt the need of such an investigation, of a deeper understanding of her nature; but now he found that delicate charm,— so simple as almost to escape notice — revealed and as it were laid bare in passages of the earlier letters, in which “Madame” and “Thérèse” recurred by turns, and in which the sweetness of a sentiment which

doubted whether it was shared sought to hide itself under a graceful playfulness, as one takes refuge from the light behind a screen of scattered trees.

“What pleases me in you, Madame, is that, involuntarily, you are like no one else. Ah, how ill such words express a fact so true! In these days women, disguised, decorated, festooned, as it were, with literature and art, are nevertheless all alike. They compose themselves like poems, with no economy of effort. They are ‘made up’ every morning for the whole day; while you,—you are made as you go along, by each act and motion, each word and emotion. Listen to them; there is always some pretty little sentiment ready to escape from their painted lips,—couplets about the sea and the mountain, church bells and Italy, the wind and the road, the season, society, love,—all offered like little cakes on a salver, in the most perfect manner. The important thing with them is to disarrange neither their dress, their faces, nor their attitudes. They are like stone goddesses in a park—only they are goddesses equipped with the phonograph. They will talk as long as you like, according to the prescribed rites, but they are motionless, and never change—except their loves, and is even that worth the trouble? But you—you never seek for harmony and yet you are miraculously harmonious. Nothing in you is prepared,—life itself moves you. The words in which you express what you feel are

no great things in themselves, but when one listens one hears a rhythm at once flexible and melodious — your own rhythm, of which you are unaware. One might suppose you a mere ordinary person, and that is what delights me. I am sure there are people who do not know that you are beautiful, nor that you are always attuned to the beauty of the world, from the caresses of the morning to those of your little daughter. I would fain be the only one who knows all your worth. Then, perhaps, I should dare to say what I dare not say to you, because — is it not so? — it is really necessary in this world to exist for some one; and if one's heart is not understood it is as if one existed for no one, and that is sad indeed. And I think that this is how I live . . .”

Thérèse had not answered these letters, as was evident from the more imploring ones which followed. She had not answered them, but she had received them and kept them. Why indeed should such well-considered homage not secretly have touched her?

It was after the days in the Riffelalp, where they had climbed the mountain together, together endured the bite of cold, the violence of the wind, the dazzle of sunshine on the snow, fatigue, and danger. On rock and glacier the rope had united them, subjected their lives to an equal fate. Allusions to this common past were multiplied in his letters. They created a sort of complicity between them, trans-

formed their comradeship into friendship, and friendship into dawning love. Thus by degrees the past, changed in character by memory, takes possession of one.

Mark perfectly recognised the Thérèse evoked by these pages at once warm and timid. He had first seen her in the chestnut avenue. Yes, it was entirely she, natural and unaffected, elusive as those fabrics which take whatever form the air or the hand chooses to give them, and *always attuned to the beauty of the world*. She had not a very determined will, she yielded easily to influences, and this was why he ought to have exerted a happy influence over her. Kindliness is never enough for natures of this sort. But when has kindliness been enough? Creatures like her should be cultivated like flowers, to which one gives sunshine and water because they need to laugh and to weep.

In her home Thérèse had enjoyed too much liberty. She had come and gone as she chose, no one had controlled her thoughts. She had been free to bestow them as she liked. No doubt he had taken some interest in her clothes, her visits, her walks. But little by little intimacy had given place to things of without, and the reign of habit had set in. He was busy building houses, and his own house was going to pieces. He was bringing order into everything, into the apartments he built, the decorations he planned, leaving nothing for fancy, for the slow action of time or sudden human caprice. Everything was orderly

determined. Ah, if she had but disarranged his plans a little, introduced some irregularity into his working hours — even into his too rigid buildings, too confident of their utility — brought a little repose to his feverish activity, his professional pride! It was her right; before he had met her, his arid heart had been content with those sudden ecstasies which one may despise, and which on the whole are easier to control than passion. How many too easily won women's hearts had he trampled underfoot, hearts which he had attracted by that in him which was hard and imperious, but also noble and strong. She, for a little while, had reconciled him with the peace and the sweetness of life. But Paris had again seized upon him, Paris whose yoke he detested while he could not shake it off, Paris to whose laws he submitted without believing in them; and Paris may make of a too simple and sensitive woman like Thérèse, if one is not careful, a little misunderstood or lost creature.

Accessible as she was to influences, so long as they were natural, influences of the time, the season, to the music of voices, to sincere words which reach the truth by the shortest road, why should not Thérèse have yielded to the influence of the man who so fervently dedicated his youth to her, who revealed her to herself merely by understanding her, and who, to crown all, was not happy. Not that he descended to complaint — complaint is wearisome and always somewhat lowers a man.

But like water which must wear away the rock to make an outlet for itself, his enthusiasm had that exuberance — that bewildered desire of happiness — which gives evidence of long effort to overcome the obstacles of life. She could believe that she herself was everything in André Norans' life. And that is madness.

What is all else when one loves as I love you? he had murmured at last. He reminded her of their solitary walks, with the universe at their feet.

Do you remember, my friend? — let me at least call you by this name, by which I can call no other woman — do you remember our ascent of the Breithorn? At the last, the guide who was at the head, before you, was obliged to cut steps in the ice, and your feet passed so lightly over them that you asked me why we took so much time? You thought we should never arrive, when suddenly your feet found themselves upon the summit, as if it had inclined a little, to give you pleasure at the last moment. On the mountains it is almost always that way. And perhaps love that is hard to win may as suddenly give up its self-defence. You were victorious, and so quick to realise your victory that your eyes filled with tears. You were not hardened like the women one generally meets upon the ice, and who are worse than men. Oh, how happy those tears made me! You were victorious with humility, as one who is vanquished. Others, when they triumph, utter shouts of joy, but you wept.

When you saw under the blue sky that great up-tossed sea of the Alps you said: "It is too beautiful." And I replied: "It will pass." I was thinking of your fatigue, and you had already forgotten it. But you did not smile. Were you thinking, my friend, as I was, that what would pass would be we, who would fain have gathered up with our eyes all that beauty of the world? The world will last without us. Some day we shall no longer be here to taste the joy of seeing and feeling. We shall no longer be here, and it will make no difference. And when one thinks of this, on a day of happiness like that, one would seize upon each second, to enjoy it apart from the next one, that each one may be transformed into eternity.

But no, you were giving yourself up to the pleasure of the moment, asking for nothing more. You never complicate things, and that is best. Then I undertook to show you my erudition, point out to you one by one the summits which surrounded us. I cannot, like you, call the stars by their names, their mysterious and somewhat uncouth names, but I do know a bit of geography. "See," I said, "that one is Great Paradise." "Well," you said: but you were looking elsewhere. I did not go on with my list of names. It was so useless. But don't think that I was displeased with your indifference. I, too, I especially, was seeing the great Paradise everywhere.

You reddened a little, Madame; your blood, all set

in motion by the climb, reached to your cheeks. Their carnation was, as it were, your aroused sensitiveness revealing itself. It was your living soul. It drew me. And to be near to that soul — forgive me, oh forgive me! — I longed to kiss you. It is still the only way —

And then we went down. One always ends by going down.

For a moment, Mark ceased to read. Those tokens of physical love which formerly he had sought for, that he might tear his heart upon them,— now that the lips of André Norans were still in death, attracted him less than the expressions which revealed Thérèse's heart. By this blood-marked path he was sure to reach the despair to which their perfect love always brought him. The more deeply to immerse himself in it, he turned the pages and paused at a sort of cantilena which he well knew, and which must have been written shortly before the tragedy of the rupture. In it, with an almost pained admiration, the lover celebrated his timid, trembling mistress.

For your hair, powdered by the bronzed light of evening, surrounding your face with a halo like the nimbus of a Madonna, for your too long hair, which is a trouble to you, of which you are more weary than proud, and of which you are the only one who does not know its splendour — I love you.

For your hands, which are neither perfumed nor polished and which yet have an odour as of flowers — for your nervous, always alert hands, more alive than yourself — I love you.

For your eyes, which are gentle to all things, never seeking to change them, which believe in the truth of objects — and of faces — for your eyes which when they rest on one are always a little sad and frightened — I love you.

For your mouth, with its sad smiles since I have constrained it to deceive, for your mouth which, since us, has taken on a line of bitterness which I can not efface — I love you.

For the resistance which you have opposed to my love and also to your own — I love you.

For the fear which you have of our meetings, for the fear with which my love-filled heart inspires you — I love you.

For your uprightness, your love of goodness, for your pity and your delicacy, for all that forbids you to give yourself entirely to me, for all that forbids me ever to make you entirely happy,— I who, for your happiness would joyfully give every drop of blood in my veins,— I love you, O my love.

And this man who knew all the power of love, of his own love, had nevertheless consented to the separation of death.

On the Proz glacier Thérèse in her fall had dragged him down. The rope which bound them had

not given way. The abyss summoned them. Frightful physical torture pushed him by the shoulders. He had only to let himself slide with her — with her who tempted him to do it, with her who offered him that last and eternal embrace. And with his last strength he had repelled all these united assaults upon his enfeebled will.

Yes, Father Sonnier was right in his funeral eulogy. That was indeed a man. And Mark, forgetting that hatred which he had now left behind him, envied him in his love and yet more in the solitude of his death. *One always ends by going down again*; happy those who have fixed high their dream of life, have attained to it, and have not gone down again.

It was a bad preparation for a visit from Mme Norans. When she was announced, Mark Romenay had long ceased to read but not to dream. Before admitting her he enclosed in a large envelope, as in a tomb, these letters which he would never read again, which he had no longer the right to read, since a new sentiment of respect bowed him before the fatal greatness of the love of which they were the living evidence.

Simone Norans was incontestably more beautiful than Thérèse. When on entering she threw back her widow's veil, no doubt that she might talk more easily, her milk-white face, of that resplendent pallor which brunettes sometimes have, and which makes brilliant amends for the absence of colour,

stood out against her black like a triumphant marble, her mouth making a blood-red line across her face. Her entire costume, in all its severity, implied a careful elegance. Mourning served as an ensign of her youth.

She seemed to hesitate to seat herself at his invitation, as if she preferred to keep the advantage of her height, upon which his eyes might not rest with impunity, or as if she remembered the insulting reception in this same room seven months before. The catastrophe which she had then precipitated had but now had its epilogue. But the event which had overtaken her had not struck her down. She was still a creature of luxury, strength, and conquest. She was still rebellious against her part, that of a betrayed, abandoned wife, so cruel to the pride of a woman of the world. And Mark, studying her, was surprised to find her just the same, so little affected by misfortune. Was he, himself, then changed so much?

What was it that she wanted? Why had she requested this interview? She made no haste to explain — she even seemed a little overcome. Was she imposing upon herself the too cruel law of hiding her emotion? Face to face with one another after their last meeting, both felt some embarrassment.

“You wanted to see me, Madame?” inquired Mark, since she kept silence.

In spite of the coldness of his tone she felt encouraged, and spoke in short breathless sentences.

She was precisely one of those women who can speak charmingly on subjects of the passing moment, but whose artifices ill prepare them for direct contact with life.

“Yes, I had to. . . . I was informed, like you, of the accident. You saw me in the Simplon train that evening, that sad evening. I was informed at Martigny. Notwithstanding my grief I was obliged to attend to the formalities of the removal. And then I returned at once to Paris. I have been able to make no inquiries. I only know the second hand details which the priest gave me. You have had more time, since death spared you. I know that you went to Mme Romenay, that you are reconciled with her. Perhaps you can give me some details. In a trial like this, one wishes to know all. You will therefore excuse my coming to you.”

How — from whom — had she learned of their reconciliation? Or had she taken it for granted, simply because he went to the Grand Saint Bernard?

He signified that he found her coming quite natural — though in fact it greatly surprised him. Then he considered how he could satisfy her. It surprised him that he could utter the name of André Norans without either anger or hatred, as if he had been an indifferent person whose tragic end could not but be a matter of general compassion. But from what he said one might have supposed that André Norans had been alone on Mount Velan. There was no word about Thérèse. Concerning

Thérèse's returning to her family no one had a right to make the slightest allusion.

Mme Norans scarcely interrupted him. The conversation soon began to languish. As she nevertheless did not appear to intend to break it off, he handed her the number of the *Petit Valaisan* from which he had received his first information. While she was reading he watched her, astounded at her calmness. Not once could he discover a quiver on that beautiful, motionless face, nor any sign of inward emotion. She returned the paper to him with a remark referring to the theory of suicide with which the long narrative had closed.

"Oh, no, they had no wish to kill themselves. How absurd!"

The blood-red mouth disdainfully rejected the romantic hypothesis. Those who have given up all for love do not think of death. But when one lover must die, and the other survives?

Mark made no reply. A vast distance separated him from this woman to whom the tragedy of Mount Velan appeared too much like any other bit of foreign news. But why had she come?

"Is that all?" she asked finally.

He would have liked to show her to the door, to rid himself of her importunate presence. But he recalled to mind Father Sonnier's testimony, which his conscience did not permit him to hold back. And briefly, in that imperious voice which permitted no contradiction, he told of the sufferings of André Nor-

ans during the three days of his lingering death; and with that desire of self-immolation, of almost sickly generosity, which takes possession of greatly tried souls who are not yet sure whether they shall emerge from the test strengthened or weakened, he even told of his courageous refusal when he had been offered a way to end his sufferings, and in his turn unhesitatingly paid tribute to him who had now ceased to be his enemy.

"He also pronounced his son's name," added Mark.

Mme Norans had been listening with an emotion which she had not attempted to hide, as if she had been more touched to hear him speak thus, than agitated by what he said. At the reference to her son she turned away her head.

"You quoted that Father Sonnier," she made bold to say, resuming the offensive. "But he could only have received these confidences from Mme Romenay."

Mark tried to check her. But she went on, pronouncing a second time the name of her rival.

"Has Mme Romenay said nothing else to you about him?"

He controlled his irritation and replied very simply,

"We never speak of the past. We shall never speak of it."

He rose, to signify to her that the interview was not to be prolonged. But at once she made a reply that struck him to the heart.

“Of what can you talk then, when you are together?”

He started as if he acknowledged the blow. Inwardly he repeated to himself the too evident, the viperous question. *Of what can you talk then when you are together?* It was because they could talk of nothing else that he had left his wife at Caux and had decided not to return to her. He had banished from their new conjugal life those vulgar, indelicate dialogues, those degrading questions, which mar forgiveness, corrupt reconciliation, by mingling it with horrid curiosity, torturing confidences; and now by an unexpected trick their new conjugal life had become impossible. A single utterance of Mme Norans had convinced him of it.

She was watching the bleeding of the wound which she herself had made. To deepen it she added:

“Is Thérèse here?”

The audacity of using her first name, which ought to have burned her lips!

“No, she is not here,” said Mark.

“You see, yourself!”

When she had come to the rue de Franqueville she had known nothing that had happened, she had simply imagined it, and now, with two replies, she had become certain. But what could the Romenay household be to her? Was not bitter regret for her husband, who in death had not thought of her but had uttered the name of their son—enough to fill the solitude of her life? Hers was the worst

sorrow, sorrow born of the irreparable, and instead of yielding to it she was seeking some incomprehensible revenge. Her inward distress was like a revolt.

Mark, shaken by her attack, yet controlled himself, and was gazing penetratingly upon her, seeking to discover the dark purpose which animated her. In spite of himself his glance rested admiringly upon her upright, slender figure, so slender in her black gown, and upon her marble face with its blood-red, dangerous mouth.

Suddenly she threw aside the mask, so suddenly as to forestall all interruption.

“Yes, you thought you had forgiven Thérèse, but you have not been able to bring her home. No more than I have you forgotten the injury, the scandal, the ridicule. Who can forget such things? And now this catastrophe, which has attacked us publicly, of which everybody has been talking and still talks! You and I, whom every one envied, sought for, admired, and whom they have made a mock of! Oh, it is in vain that I have fought against myself, excited myself to pity in the face of death, always, always, I feel that I detest them! And do not you feel so too?”

She treated him like an accomplice, assumed that he felt the same vanity, the same preoccupation with public opinion, the same pettiness of resentment. Seven months earlier, urged by rancour, she had instinctively come to him, counting upon him to avenge

her. Had she made up this present scene in advance? Other indications gave him reason to think so. Before her marriage had she not attracted Mark's attention, sought to be seen in public with him? And later, at Zermatt, how could he have been mistaken in the advances which she made to him? Thus for a few moments he was asking himself, hardly listening to her, making no reply to her passionate questioning, but watching with a too interested curiosity her movements, as of a wild beast in a cage. But she seemed to him too much under the dominance of her own nature for such a design, such premeditation to be attributed to her. Above all, she seemed to him too beautiful. She had always felt an attraction toward him which in a time of unhappiness spontaneously revealed itself. He excused her for it, he even felt almost proud of it. In the distress which he had experienced since his return from Saint Bernard he had lost his sureness of judgment, his strength of character, and his aching body was all the more sensitive to the appeal of the flesh.

With more gentleness than she had expected of him, instead of repelling her summarily he simply replied:

“No, I do not understand you.”

She made a discouraged gesture, and standing before him as she had been, she suddenly sank down into the chair she had quitted, as if crushed by despair, and folding her arms upon the table buried her face in them.

It was a burning August day, and notwithstanding the protection of the trees, the small study was oppressively warm. While speaking Mme Norans had mechanically slipped down one of her gloves, exposing her forearm. Mark could not but observe its whiteness with its network of blue veins. Crouched over as she was she could not see him, but he felt sure that if he were to touch the bare elbow she would not repel him. The veil thrown back revealed the nape of her neck, emerging from the square cut gown, luminous under the mass of black hair and beaded with tiny drops of perspiration. He felt that she shivered — as if she expected, longed for, the touch of his hand.

Those are the victors, the fortunate men who remain masters of themselves in every circumstance of life, who keep the faculty of choice. They smile upon women, but though they please, they put them from them. Discouraged, overcome, humiliated men have not this liberty, they do not react against circumstances, they yield, give way to them. For to yield is to forget.

The beautiful Simone did not raise her head. What was the expression of her hidden face? Mark felt a temptation to lift it up, take it in his hands, risk a rough assertion of his power. Without explaining it to himself he felt no doubt that he had power. It would be his revenge for the derision of fate, betrayal, ridicule, the tragic end, the return to all the baseness of existence.

"Lift up your head, Madame," he suddenly said, his voice at first somewhat agitated, but at once becoming firm, and relieving the equivocal character of the too long continued silence, "lift up your head, I beg."

As she did not move he added:

"You must put down this hatred which gives you so much pain. We have had our own part in our misfortunes, we also have our own responsibilities. For your son's sake you should shield *his* memory."

She was on her feet in an instant. Was it he who spoke, bringing both of them into accusation, giving this unexpected advice? She looked at him to make sure and saw him calm and unmoved. Shame overwhelmed her, and she drew her veil over her face as if she had suffered an outrage. She retreated toward the door.

"Adieu, sir," she said in a low voice.

But recovering assurance on the threshold, she shot her last arrow:

"It will be enough if Mme Romenay shields his memory."

He politely summoned the servant to escort her. The last arrow seemed not to have struck him.

Nothing had passed between Mme Norans and himself. And yet this woman with her too white face and too red lips, whose mourning brought into relief her youthful figure, had attracted him balefully, and he did not understand how he had resisted her. Overwhelmed by her fate, or too much wounded

by it, she had not concealed her own emotion, if indeed she had not purposely assumed it. Many irregular connections, passions, adventures, have had no other cause than an avowed clash of desires, have needed no more formal consent. How had he escaped the offered temptation, which whether from lassitude or a morbid impulse of vengeance he himself had almost welcomed? He had not thought of Thérèse. It was not his sad tenderness for Thérèse which had held him back. Possessed by the memory of André Norans he had suddenly beheld him, fixed upon his rock like a martyr bound to the stake, refusing a self-inflicted death, sparing her who had proposed it, assuring her that she would live, that she would live without him and apart from him. And not to lag behind him, by the imperious necessity of not proving himself unworthy of such an adversary, he had repelled the beautiful Simone, had even cruelly recalled her to her duty.

On the other side of Orsières a funeral car covered with bunches of wild flowers had met his carriage.

“Whose funeral is that?” he had asked.

And being told, he had saluted.

Here, as there on the Grand Saint Bernard road, he had bowed before the dead, with a sentiment of respect and even of desire to be equal to him. A sense of honour is a good support. And he again

experienced that feeling of exaltation which he had known beside the bed of his broken Thérèse, that state in which everything appears to be simple, easy, pleasant.

III

THE Palace Hotel of Caux, with its immense main building, its open rotunda, its three or four hundred rooms and the endless ribbon of red tiles which is its roof, is a castle of these modern days with industrial towers and commercial bastions. Everything is arranged for comfort and pleasure,—everything but its architecture. It stands half way up between Lake Lemman and the Rocks of Naye. Groves of pine and larch, modifying the steepness of the slope, surround it but leave an open space for its lawns. It is the new mountain burg, as Swiss fashions and cosmopolitan requirements have perfected it, binding nature to serve the pleasures of society, and converting the most beautiful landscape into a luxurious accessory.

One may at choice lead the gayest society life or remain isolated. Its dimensions lend themselves to independence. It is equally easy to appear in a different dress three or four times a day, to flirt, play, dance, shine, carry on gallant adventures, or to enjoy a commonplace family life, or to shut oneself up in one's own room. The hall is so vast that four hundred teas may be served in it at one time and

from all the neighbouring resorts pleasure parties come hither; in summer when the heat lessens, and in winter when the night comes down and interrupts ski or snow-shoe excursions. All is then movement, animation, that physical joy which the open air and exercise add to the beauty of faces and the sound of conversation.

And yet that Elizabeth of Austria, to whom a poet gave the title, "Empress of Solitude," could remain there a long time and no one suspect her presence. She enjoyed Caux almost as much as the shores of the Adriatic and the terraces of Corfu. She excelled in creating a silence around herself, and in the most frequented places knew how to be far away. It was from Caux, one morning, that she set out to be assassinated at Geneva.

Thérèse Romenay was one of the guests whom no one noticed. She seldom left her room, whether because she was not yet recovered from her fall or because she wished to avoid indiscreet curiosity. Many a saunterer had lost his time seeking to fathom from a distance the mystery of the woman who like a prisoner spent long hours on her balcony, sometimes seated, like an invalid, in a wicker arm chair, sometimes standing and watching the play of light and shade. More than one, irritated by their ignorance, had even gone so far as to question the little girl who was known to be her daughter, and who, with fussy Mme Acher in her train, was already en-

joying, as she did everywhere, a pretty popularity. In the group of hotel children, most of them English or German, high coloured like new Nuremberg toys, Juliette was distinguished by her amber pallor, her lighter grace, a livelier turn of mind.

"Who is that lady?" some one asked her.

"Mamma."

For her "mamma" signified everything, but to strangers it meant nothing. And if any one insisted, she would lift her large, too intelligent eyes, almost embarrassing to them who were overstepping their rights, and would be silent.

"Have you no father?" asked one of them one day.

No father! She burst out laughing at the idea. No father! How could any one be so stupid? The matter was quite worth telling to her great friend, Sylvia Monestier, who had reached Caux before her. But Sylvia did not find it so amusing. One might very easily have no father since she, herself, had no mamma. And what is the use of a papa whom one never sees?

On her return from the walk during which this dialogue had taken place, Juliette rushed to her mother's room.

"Mamma, why do we never see papa?"

Somewhat surprised at her excitement Thérèse Romenay took her darling upon her knee, not only to calm her but to conceal her own sadness.

"He is coming, very soon."

“When?”

“To-morrow or the day after.”

“No! I want him to come right away. A papa whom one never sees is not a papa.”

“There, there, hush! He is working, building beautiful houses,— and he is on the way here.”

But Juliette, quite disturbed, was not so easily quieted, and her next question was a cruel one.

“Will he stay away as long as you did, mamma?”

Surprised at herself for having asked it, fearing that she had acted badly, or done some forbidden thing, or worse still, been naughty, she threw her arms about her mother’s neck, and on the verge of tears exclaimed:

“But you will not go away again, now.”

Notwithstanding present happiness, she could recollect the time when her mamma was like dead persons whom one never sees, and whom one forgets. Why did she never see her father and mother both at the same time, like all the other children, except Sylvia Monestier — but Mr. Monestier — and Thérèse Romenay, distressed and almost trembling, still endeavouring to console her, heard her laugh in spite of herself. Happy age, when feelings thus have wings and seldom light for more than a moment!

“What is it, little one?”

“Mr. Monestier”—And following up her thought, repeating remarks that had been made in her presence, she explained that Mr. Monestier was acting as Sylvia’s nurse. At once she began to

amuse herself by imitating him. It was "You will take cold," and "You are too warm," a shawl for her shoulders, a handkerchief to wipe off her face—he never left Sylvia alone for a moment, and everybody laughed at him, even Mlle Irma, the German lady who was learning French.

"What German lady?"

"Mr. Monestier's German lady, of course. They gather flowers together in a great tin box. And Sylvia sticks out her tongue behind their backs."

"Sylvia isn't a good little girl."

"Oh, she has reason enough for doing it. Mlle Irma is taking her papa away from her."

And Juliette immediately imitated the hoarse voice, the doctoral tone and the brusque gestures of the foreign lady.

"Children should be accustomed to cold, heat, weariness."

"Juliette! Juliette! I shall scold you."

Her little girl's stories and reflections and Mr. Monestier's calls were Thérèse Romenay's sole contact with the inmates of the hotel. And even Sylvia's father's visits became less frequent as they prolonged their stay. No doubt he was absorbed in the flowers brought home from their walks in a great tin box,—or else in Mlle Irma.

This isolation suited the convalescent. Her bruised body, which in the beginning felt pain at every motion, was by degrees recovering. During the first days she had given herself up to an almost

animal existence. When one has touched death so nearly, life takes on a physical charm which one is surprised into enjoying for its own sake. One feels it throbbing drop by drop through one's veins, hears it course through one with the regular tic-tac of a watch — it is a continual delight. One thinks of it in detail; it is an occupation so absorbing that nothing else is needed to occupy the thoughts. Sometimes Thérèse reproached herself for the torpor to which she owed the gradual recovery of her strength. She tried to throw it off, only to sink back into it again. Later she would try to reduce to order the chaos of sufferings and hopes which she had brought from her cell in Saint-Bernard. For the moment she was incapable of it. They must have patience with her, as with a poor, much suffering, much exhausted invalid, who could only recover slowly.

At first Mark's absence did not surprise her. No doubt his business demanded him. Besides, a woman who lies all day on a sofa is not an agreeable object, hardly endurable, even, for an active man who soon discovers the inutility of his compassion to work a cure. Much better for him not to be there. Besides, it was surely out of consideration that he left it to succeeding days to cement their reconciliation. The music of his unexpected words still rang in her ears, the first he had said: "*My little Thérèse*" — and they moved her to pity for him and for herself.

How luxuriously he had established her at Caux — too luxuriously! but in material things had he not

always spoiled her? The corner apartment which she occupied in the hotel was composed of a sitting-room separated by a glass partition from an antechamber which had been easily converted into a dining-room, with two large chambers, one on either side of the sitting-room. Mme Acher and Juliette occupied one, the other was reserved for her own use. As soon as she had been able to stand without fatigue, she had dragged herself to the glass doors which opened upon the balcony, whence there was a view on both sides; one looked down a vista to the Oberland, with its pine-covered hills, its green prairies and the Rocks of Jaman; the other showed the lake in its entire length from the mouth of the Rhine to the Point d'Yvoire, and along the horizon, the Alps of Savoy and of Le Valais.

This last perspective fascinated her. She would remain for hours watching its changes with the changing shadows. No country in the world has so soothing an influence upon restless nerves. Sky, water, and all the forms of things blend with one another to invite to rest and calm, to encourage one to consent to live.

Her past was fixed before her eyes. After the bay of Villeneuve, where the lake gradually expands, beyond the seven-peaked Dent du Midi, she could distinguish in clear weather the glaciers of the Trient, and at a still greater distance, was not that the direction of the mountain which she could not see, but could imagine, the mountain of her agony? She

would turn away in terror, then seek for it again. But on the declivities of Savoy, she thought she saw, — there was often a slight mist, and there was always the distance and the bend of the lake, but did she not see — her childhood's home among the chestnuts signalling to her? She tried to determine its site from various marks, church towers and villages. And soon, letting herself go, she was back in the days when, a too sensitive little girl, she was reaching out her arms, without knowing for what, toward those enervating shores, waiting for the love which should fill her too hungry heart. Like so many women she had always lived to love. One sets out thus, not knowing whither one goes. Now she was afraid of love, whose delight and cruelty she well knew.

Was its cruelty yet exhausted? Was love not yet weary of pursuing her? Was he still grasping her heart like a captive whom he would not consent to set free? Why, now, instead of following up the Rhone Valley or turning in the direction of Savoy, did she fix her eyes upon the road across the lawns below the hotel, tracing it down to the station of the little electric road? Her balcony is perched too high for her easily to recognise a figure, but that does not prevent her trying. And the men walking below have observed her gaze, flattering themselves that their glances have had an effect.

Thérèse, weak Thérèse, of what are you thinking? Your lover is dead upon the mountain, and you have

seen how he bore pain. He repelled you when you offered to follow or to precede him to the land from which no one returns. He repelled you because he loved you with that greatest of all loves, the love that forgets self. Every night you say a prayer for the repose of his soul, and while you are saying it you hide your face, because you are again with him on that martyr-place of Proz, or because you consider your love a guilty one. Yes, doubtless there are all the generations of good women from whom you have issued, resting in the consecrated ground of the little village cemetery which you long to discern. Your grandmother is there and your dear mother, who would not have understood you, whom you would have put to shame, and who are calling you. And here is your adored little Juliette who needs her manma,—her fugitive little mamma whose sin she will never know. And here is all the order of your home, all the sweetness of every-day peace, all these daily blessings, lost and found again. And finally here is God to whom you pray and who has pardoned you because you have repented. But can she be faithless to the thought of her love? No one knows her thoughts. They do no harm to any one, and she may direct them to whom she will. One cannot always command one's thoughts — they fly away like birds that laugh at the bird-catcher. They are imperceptible parcels of our being. They are also the very truth of us. Thérèse, toward whom are your thoughts going?

Her lover died upon the mountain, and she is living.

It is more than a month since she was brought from Grand Saint Bernard. A month and more, and Mark has not yet come. Burning August, which on these heights is tempered, is drawing to a close, and he has not yet come. His letters give plausible reasons for his prolonged absence, but reasons are never anything more than reasons. And his letters are written in so large a hand, as if he was afraid of not filling the sheet. Yes, they breathe confidence, strong manly tenderness, they have even that tone of esteem and respect which puts away the past, rehabilitates her, lifts her up in her own eyes; but she longs for more spontaneity. Mark is no doubt a man who disdains effusiveness, who keeps his feelings to himself. But she is ill, he ought not to forget that. His are such letters as a husband writes his wife after years of marriage, when he relies upon her absolutely. Years of marriage, yes, very true; only she had left him and he has forgiven her.

How differently she would write as soon as she should be in a condition to write! A wounded hand had prevented. She had had to dictate to Juliette, slowly, and dictating is not the same thing.

When her wound was healed, for several days she made as if her hand was still painful. She did try — composed a rough draft, her temples throbbing, her fingers trembling, her words refusing to obey, she not knowing how to say what she felt. She had

thought it would be so simple! Everything had ceased to be simple. And her letters were as awkward, as embarrassed, as those of her husband.

But let him come and all would be well, all would be bright as at Saint Bernard, in the cell where they had found one another. Then suddenly the fear seized her that he would not come. He had felt pity for her, but he no longer loved her.

He no longer loved her. Her beautiful hair had been cut off and it was growing slowly, a little less golden, a little darker than before. Evidently it would never be so long, nor so soft and silky. She looked like a young boy, especially those first days, while her skin was still bronzed and her features hardened. Still, she was now not bad to look at. Her mirror, when she asked of it, at first hesitatingly, was now helping to reassure her. The bruises had disappeared, her nose had recovered its pure outline and her cheeks the rosy tint that went and came with the ebb and flow of her emotions. A line at the corner of the lips, another under the eyes, spoke of sufferings endured, but these chisellings of life have their own charm: they give the face a deeper expression. And her slender form had all its suppleness, its alert motions. Why did not Mark come to see her?

He came at last. It was some little time after the visit of Mme de Norans. He had not written that he was coming. He was not more expected on that day than on other days, not more or not less. He

knocked at the door, as if the apartment were not inscribed with his own name, and as no one answered he was obliged to knock several times. Early as was the hour she was already on the balcony, gazing down the road. He had come by it, but she had not distinguished him. And she was obliged to come to the ante-chamber in order to say "Come in," loud enough for him to hear.

He had meant to fly to her and kiss her. She longed to throw herself into his arms. And there they were face to face, embarrassed, motionless, she paling with surprise, and he mistaking the meaning of her pallor. First misunderstandings are hard to rectify.

"It is I, Thérèse, I should have let you know. You were frightened, I think."

"Frightened! Oh, no, Mark, I am glad to see you."

"It has been a good while."

"So long!"

He took her hand and kissed it ceremoniously. She dared not offer her cheek, and her cheek with its returning colour allured him. He noticed its lovely curve, its delicacy. Both had by a natural impulse proscribed the "thee and thou" of intimacy. As at Grand Saint Bernard, nothing happened as they had pictured it, but by a strange revulsion they found themselves farther apart than before their separation. They tried to keep up the languishing conversation by not talking about themselves.

"My mother sends her love," he said.

"Thank you, she has always been good to me."

She tried to answer as he would like to have her, and she feared she was not succeeding. He asked about Juliette, who was wonderfully well, out walking with Mme Acher, but sure to return soon.

"You are very much alone here," he remarked. "You ought not to be alone."

"I am not lonely."

Had she made friends with strangers he could not have been more disturbed. She explained that Sylvia Monestier was a good little friend for their daughter, and that Mr. Monestier sometimes came to see her, but more and more seldom. He was said to be engaged to Mlle Irma Waldheim, a German girl, whose family was staying at Caux. Michael Monestier engaged! He was astounded. So this was the end of that fine posthumous passion which he had so complacently displayed to universal admiration! How easily people change and forget! They had reached this point in their reflections upon Mr. Monestier when they suddenly checked themselves — perceiving the abyss into which they were plunging. *How easily people change and forget!* This was the enclosed ground upon which they might not trespass.

Thrown back upon themselves, what could they find to say? She cast about a moment in her mind, blushing like a timid girl, and at last inquired as to his luggage.

"Here it is," he replied, pointing to a dressing case, a *serviette* and a rug, bound together by a

shawl strap. She uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"But they will bring up your trunks. You will stay a good while, will you not?"

"No, Thérèse, I cannot. I must complete my plans for Russia."

"A few days, at least? Shall you not take a vacation?"

"I return to-night."

"So soon?"

In her pained surprise she could say no more. And he with aching heart thought how little she cared to keep him with her. Thus the misunderstanding between them increased. Everything hurt them, every word was a new wound.

After a pained silence she tried to bring up other subjects, but each fell flat, like stones thrown into the water and disappearing. She led him out upon the balcony, did him the honours of the view. It had rained toward morning, but the clouds had disappeared. Sky and water are never so limpid as after a shower. A bluish haze, a fine-weather haze, lightly veiled the forms of the hills and mountains.

"And down there," she said pointing, "don't you see something? Down there? Yes, it is my old home."

"It can't be seen from here, it is too far away, beyond the bend of the lake."

"Very likely," she said gently, "but I know it is there and it makes me happy."

To please her, he too searched for the hill of Publier among the trees. There he had first seen Thérèse, and from their first meeting he had felt her charm, the charm that only André Norans had found words to describe. After he had turned her out of his house — so brutally! — perhaps she had taken refuge in the old home. Perhaps she had taken refuge there with her love. Then what would become of his memories of their betrothal? In her turn she had turned him out of her house.

He could not ask her “Did you go there with him?” He had forbidden himself to return to the past. He could never know, but with this doubt he now lost all the happiness that had been left to him. Unable to endure it, he turned away from the view and went back into the sitting-room.

She was thinking, “He no longer loves me. He would not recognise the house where I gave him my faith.” For the moment she had forgotten that she had betrayed her faith. And he was thinking of the man whom she was forgetting.

She went back to him, and suddenly exclaimed,

“I am not pretty any longer, Mark, with my short hair. Haven’t I grown ugly? And I have wrinkles, here and there,— see! I am afraid I look old.”

She had drawn close to him, the better to show him, with an artless and confiding grace which was not coquetry but simply the natural desire to please, of a young wife to whom her husband pays

no compliments. He looked at her, infinitely sad:

“You are mistaken, Thérèse. You are more beautiful than you used to be.”

Her face, chiselled by experience, appeared to him most touching. Or else he better understood her strong, undefinable attraction. Far from being flattered by a verdict pronounced with a gravity which was like a warrant of its accuracy, she was frightened by it. She would have preferred a smile or a kiss — the kiss of greeting which she had expected and had not received. She dimly wondered if Mark was not regretting the pitiful, ravaged face he had seen at Saint Bernard, and was not offended by her innocent question.

During one of the too frequent pauses in their conversation he unfastened the shawl strap, and taking an envelope from the *serviette* he handed it to his wife, with the words:

“These letters are yours: I return them to you. I had no right to keep them.”

At first she did not understand; she was not prepared to understand. Quite unembarrassed, she accepted the mysterious parcel, and even asked, “What is it?”

“Open it after I am gone — this evening or tomorrow. Perhaps it would be best to destroy *them*. You alone can do that.”

He was not assuming a chivalrous part. André Norans' letters did not belong to him. He, himself,

in his study at La Murette had been about to burn them, but this duty it was for Thérèse alone to perform. He would not usurp her place. Would she wish to read over once again these impassioned words? Or, perhaps, she would refuse to do so, freely, before him, and that would be a proof of her renewed love for him. He was still seeking to understand the emotions of that past which he assured himself he had obliterated.

At last she understood, and her whole face was crimsoned in a moment, as a beach is instantaneously covered by the rising tide.

“Oh,” she protested, almost indignantly, “why did you not burn them? It was wrong”—and without hesitating she met his thought; “I will burn them myself, now, in your presence.”

He could not misapprehend her quick impulse; he even thought it almost cruel to André Norans. Thus set free Thérèse would the more surely return to him. Yet, not wishing to embarrass her by his presence, willing to leave her alone at a moment that must be so painful and crowded with memories, he turned away and went out upon the balcony.

The blower of the fireplace was drawn down, and she found it heavy to lift. In these modern hotels the most elementary objects are lacking. What with electricity and steam heat there are never any matches. She had to go to her bedroom to look for some. And from the balcony he thought that she had gone to read over her lover's letters.

She made haste to deliver to the flames what had once filled her heart and life. The dried sheets curled, writhed, shrivelled, fluttered. Leaning over them, she might have read by the light of the flame whole passages, written in those large, upright characters that she knew so well. Then all was black and turned to ashes. She had not leaned over, she had more than once hastened the fire, but when there remained nothing but ashes she wept.

For what was she weeping? She herself could not quite have told. Perhaps the reaction of nerves sorely tried and still weak. She was weeping over herself, over the pain of her husband's hostility, over the latent sadness which she could not fathom and which, like her wounds, was being scarred over, healing without being touched. That sadness was named André Norans, but she had ceased to give it a name, except in her prayers. Like all convalescents, she was longing to live, absorbed in the present.

Mark had returned to the room, though she was not aware of it, and he was watching her weep. He thought she was weeping for the other, and he admitted that she had the right; a second time she was closing the eyes of the dead.

He was about to retire, to leave her to her regrets, and give himself up to jealous distress, but she had perceived him. They looked at one another, and finding nothing to say they suffered silently, she because of him, and he because of the past.

IV,

JULIETTE'S entrance was a reprieve.

She came in like a little queen, followed by her court and not in the least concerned with formalities, calling from the antechamber,

"Mamma, mamma, here is Mr. Monestier, who asks if you will receive him."

But when, opening the door, she saw her father and mother together, she uttered an exclamation of surprise, followed by a shout of joy. Little she asked whether they were sad or gay, it was enough that they were together. After caresses repeatedly bestowed upon both, she turned in triumph to the group, discreetly withdrawn into the background, formed by Mme Acher, Mr. Monestier and little Sylvia, as if to prove to them that one could very well have a father and a mother both at once. She had even a mind to overwhelm, with the weight of this fact, the little friend who really deserved a lesson for harbouring such injurious doubts. But she had a kind heart and knew it — and checked herself in her triumph. Sylvia had only a papa to exhibit, — and yet — and yet — as if she hadn't seen what was going on among the Monestiers and unmasked

the tricks of that grasping German young lady! She didn't keep her eyes in her pocket, and you may believe that one needs to be mighty sharp!

Every one was crowding around Mme Romenay. Mark observed how naturally she had become the object of the attentions, preferences, confidences, of each. Mme Acher, who had once condemned her without pity, now vanquished, reduced to mercy, approving in advance all her acts; Sylvia stealing to her side like a second daughter — though Juliette was on the watch to put her back in her place — and Mr. Monestier deferring to her judgment, appealing to her wisdom. What invisible charm radiated from this woman who never sought for empire, was destitute of artifice, who continually turned to him as if appealing to him and placing herself under his protection?

When the governess had taken the children out upon the balcony, Mr. Monestier explained his early visit. He had become betrothed the previous evening to Mlle Irma Waldheim, whose parents occupied an excellent position in Leipzig; he had come to inform his friends and especially to beg Mme Romenay to inform Sylvia.

“I am afraid of giving her pain, myself,” he explained. “You, madame, will know better than I what to say. Your words are as gentle as the hands of a sick-nurse, that touch without hurting.”

The better to deserve her help, he felt called upon to explain the reason of his engagement:

“ These last years I have hardly lived except for my daughter. I should like to live for myself, a little. I had no thought of ever marrying again — but life is strong. Race, religion, tastes, everything separated me from Mlle Waldheim, and yet, — you see! She has so much energy, so much ardour; she is vigorous, fresh, and frank, afraid of nothing. She is magnificent when she climbs the hills, scales the rocks; she should never be ill, never die. The mere sight of her gives health.”

After herself it was the turn of her family.

“ All these Germans are somewhat noisy, somewhat vain, somewhat heavy, but full of frankness and good humour. Now and then they make an indelicate allusion to the war, to their military or commercial superiority, but I show my teeth and they soon make haste to pacify me. They are enchanted with their little Irma’s conquest — they are thinking to annex me like Alsace. But once married I shall not be likely to be much in Leipzig.”

Then alleging the hour — time to meet his fiancée — he took his leave, reminding Mme Romenay of the mission he had entrusted to her. Mark, going with him to the door, invited him to lunch. He dreaded to be alone with Thérèse and would fain make sure of a third party.

“ The Waldheims will not like it — but my faith! I accept all the same. It is well to make oneself desired. Here, or at the restaurant? ”

Mark turned to his wife and repeated the question.

Juliette, coming in, at once understood what was under consideration and threw herself into the discussion.

"The restaurant! the restaurant! There are so many people there, and here it is always the same. Papa, we haven't been down to the restaurant a single time! And there is a great window looking out upon the lake."

"I have nothing to wear," Thérèse timidly objected, lifting her hand at the same time to her short hair with the graceful gesture of an amphora bearer. In the restaurant she would be an object of general curiosity, and perhaps every one would know her for the pitiful heroine of the mountain tragedy. Why inflict the darts of so many eyes upon her scarcely healed face? But if she should appear too anxious to remain in her apartment, would not her husband believe that she was taking refuge in her secret sorrow, resolved not to emerge from it? She dared not insist and waited, almost trembling, for Mark's decision.

He was thinking of losing himself in the crowd, avoiding intimate conversation at any cost; of passing in Michael Monestier's commonplace society that day in which he had hoped to find happiness and which from the very first moment had disappointed him — betrayed him, like Thérèse.

"Your gown is very elegant, I assure you," he said. "You are so much alone! It will amuse you."

She made no objection, and was already thinking of a little gown which with a slight change, easy to effect before lunch, would be more becoming.

Mr. Monestier having departed, while her husband was listening to the chatter of Juliette, always overflowing with things to tell, she took Sylvia aside, and before breaking the news, looked at her long and sorrowfully. She had never wished to give anyone pain, and here she was charged to torture a child's heart.

"Would you not like a mamma, my darling?"

"Papa is enough for me."

"A papa is not always enough."

"Oh, but my papa is just like a mamma."

Yet she was not too sure of that now. Her father no longer bundled her up in shawls that were too heavy, no longer called her in from the evening air; no longer was present when she was being put to bed. A wave of regret for those bygone days suddenly swept over her, and after that assurance of her satisfaction she threw herself into Mme Ronenay's arms, who petted and consoled her, adding,

"They tell me that she is fair and rosy-cheeked. She will love you well, I am certain."

"Who?"

"Irma Waldheim."

"Ah, that German! For my part I don't love her."

"Why not?"

"She pricks."

“Pricks?”

“Yes, the first time she kissed me, her brooch pricked me.”

There had been other pricks besides those of the symbolic brooch. Thérèse was silently indignant, with the best faith in the world, at the barbarity, the infidelity, of Mr. Monestier, who, forgetting the much wept-for dead, was inflicting a step-mother upon this child.

“Promise me to love her,” she said, by way of relieving her conscience, kissing the little girl.

“I never can.”

“Try!”

“Ah. Juliette is the lucky one!”

“Why?”

“She has both a papa and a mamma,—ever since she was born, perhaps.”

When Mme Romenay made her appearance in the vast dining-room of the hotel, passing through to the table reserved for them near the open bay window, she felt herself stared at from all sides, and it seemed to her that she was enduring the tortures of those martyrs who used to be exposed, naked, in the circus. From the shadow in which, till now, she had been living, she had suddenly come out into blinding light. Her short hair, her air as of a young boy, made it impossible for her to pass unperceived. She knew nothing of the current legends of “the lady of the balcony,” but she divined offensive comments. Her very simple white serge gown was al-

most the dress of a young girl. But her very simplicity, her blushes, her embarrassment, at once awoke sympathy. And such was her charm, more powerful than beauty, that the curiosity of which she was the object soon ceased to be hostile. She seemed to be gently saying, "Forget me, do not look at me. I am only a woman, a poor woman, who has suffered much and perhaps has not yet finished."

Mark, who followed her with Mr. Monestier, regretting his decision, felt the insolence of the spectators, which he could have been glad to punish, then perceived with surprise their courteous surrender. This day which he had so wished to spend alone with her, he had himself laid waste like a garden of flowers. And now, behold, the sense of exaltation which Thérèse gave him, was being felt by these others, but without the bitterness and sadness, without all the pain with which for him it was mingled. Sylvia and Juliette, radiant, upright in their chairs, playing they were ladies, were delighted to be permitted to choose their own *hors-d'œuvres*. From a distance Michael Monestier bowed to the Waldheims whom he covertly pointed out to his hosts, that the latter might admire the opulent Mlle Irma and her robust appetite. He explained that he was in bondage for the afternoon; an expedition that the whole party had organised for the Dent de Jaman: the children were to be with them.

"Trust Juliette to me, it is a small climb — nothing at all. We take the electric railway, get down

at Combe d'Amont and from there reach the summit in three quarters of an hour. From it there is a very extensive view."

Turning to Mark, he sought to enlist him, partly from politeness, and also that he might not feel himself lost among all those Germans.

"Accompany your little girl. The open air will do you good."

"I am leaving this evening."

"Oh, we shall be back in time for your train, even if we come down on foot."

Mark resisted, for he longed to remain with Thérèse, to be alone with her, though it tore his heart in twain. He tried to read in his wife's eyes, and she thought he was refusing on her account, though desiring to accept. When confidence is gone, everything becomes misunderstanding. She also longed for a little time alone with him, that she might try to understand his thought, recover his affection as at Saint Bernard; but to please him, she encouraged him to make the excursion.

"It will do you good after Paris."

He imagined that she did not care for his company. "Very well," he said, "I will go."

And at once she regretted having urged him against her own wishes.

They set out after luncheon with all those Germans, all in climbing costumes, and all, even the oldest and the fattest, assuming a warlike air. Gaitered, armed with staves, their breasts crossed

with the straps of their field glasses and map-cases, they put on airs as if they were in uniform; their feet were enormous in their nailed shoes.

Michael Monestier and Mark Romenay, who had not so much as turned up their trousers, and who dared to wear their boots and carry their canes, were objects of sarcasm in the electric car. One of the ladies ironically observed:

“They are going to Versailles.”

On alighting from the train, Mlle Irma placed herself at the head of the caravan. With her casque of blond hair, her tall, robust figure, her fine carnation, she resembled a Walkyrie of the mountains. She seemed actually to dispense health merely by showing herself. Mark understood the infatuation of his companion, who fell into line behind the young lady, and to make sure of being understood paid her the grossest compliments, such as in France are reserved for actresses and literary women. Behind them came Sylvia, melancholy, hanging her head like a whipped dog. When the path narrowed, the German girl took the child's hand and dragged her along with authority.

The short climb is only an amusement. But on the summit, instead of enjoying the charming view, on one side over the lake and the Alps of Savoy and Le Valais, on the other over the hills and pastures of La Gruyère, all those Tartars of the North, by way of making the most of their costumes and their stock of courage, amused themselves with braving vertigo

by passing in turn along a narrow ledge above a precipice. Mlle Waldheim had inaugurated the game and Mlle Waldheim was not to be disobeyed.

Mark glanced at Juliette, whom he had placed behind him, and saw her braving the undertaking with great delight.

“At Saint Bernard,” she observed, by way of maintaining her superiority, “it was quite another thing.”

He deemed it useless to disturb her tranquillity. She made a bow forward — all the same it was somewhat risky, but he was there to snatch her — then a dancing step, and the adventure was over for her.

There was still Sylvia, who had stepped to the rear of the battalion. She had no love for such exercises.

“Be very careful,” cried her father, and that completed her terror. She refused to make the attempt, and wanted to go back. Mlle Waldheim burst into a laugh.

“Ah, ah, you are dizzy.” And seizing her, she exclaimed:

“I’ll soon cure you of that, little goose!”

She carried her up to a rock which she had before observed at a still more dizzy height, and leaned over with her in her arms.

The child screamed and struggled, great tears gushing from her eyes.

“You see! It is nothing, little French coward!”

The whole company were looking on, sneering, when Michael Monestier appeared behind the young

woman. He snatched Sylvia from her, saying roughly,

“Let her alone.”

The child stopped crying. The betrothed pair confronted one another like two enemies.

“You are crazy! I didn’t hurt her.”

“You saw that she was frightened.”

“Precisely. She must get over her fears.”

Without replying, Michael drew his little girl to the edge of the precipice.

“Are you afraid now?”

“Not with you, papa.”

“And if I should ask you to let go of my hand?”

“See me do it!”

Sylvia stood upright on the very edge, motionless, her lips pressed together. She was trembling a little, but what did she care? She knew that something serious was going on, and that it would be best that she should not cry, nor draw back. Without knowing it, she was at that moment under the influence of her mother’s memory.

While Mark Romenay and Juliette applauded, her father lifted her and held her arm out at arm’s length.

“You are a brave little girl,” he said.

Then turning to Irma Waldheim he added severely.

“You did not know her. You understand nothing about her.”

This threw a coldness over the company. Instead of lunching on the grass, they went down the hill

again. Before they reached the foot, Michael Monestier and Irma Waldheim were no longer engaged. One act had sufficed to show them what they really were to one another — strangers.

Juliette, excited by the incident, hastened to her mother, exclaiming, “Sylvia’s father struck that naughty German lady, who wanted to throw her over the precipice.”

Mark explained the true state of the case, and now it was time for him to go. The day to which he had so looked forward was ending, like one of these Autumn days when from hour to hour we expect the sun to pierce the fog that covers all the landscape, and night comes before it has once appeared.

“When will you come again?” Thérèse asked, timidly.

Ah! if she had but said, “Why do you go?” But she made no attempt to detain him. Henceforth she would submit to the future as to a thrallldom.

“I do not know when I shall come again. Soon, probably.”

“And what are your plans for us?”

As she asked the simple question she felt the wave of colour that swept over her cheeks to the lobes of her ears. She so longed to know when she could return to *her* home. Until then it seemed to her that her undefined future would be precarious.

“Well,” said Mark, “you may remain here for some time yet.”

“I am well enough to travel.”

"When the bad weather comes, you can return to Paris."

"To Paris!" she murmured tenderly.

"Yes, my mother will keep you company during my absence."

"You are going away, then?"

"I shall spend the winter in Russia."

"And not take me?"

"Consider, Thérèse, the winter is too severe there."

"Ah!"

She made no attempt to resist, but she at last understood — what she had not been willing to admit — that the forgiveness at Saint Bernard was a dead letter. And as on the Proz glacier, after the death of her companion, she knew the infinite terror of solitude. With a passionate cry which rent his very heart, she called Juliette who was playing on the balcony, and clasped her in her arms as if some one had threatened to take her from her. Scarcely had she relaxed her clasp when Mark in his turn, drawing the child to him, was seeking on her cheeks the kisses that Thérèse had given her.

In their mutual distress each clung to the living link, the enduring link of their former love.

A child had sufficed to break Michael Monestier's engagement. Would Juliette suffice to win for their hearts the victory over the memories that were separating them?

V

THE Waldheim family left the hotel the second day after the famous quarrel.

From his window Michael Monestier watched the disappearance of the beautiful Irma. He thought that she would look back from the garden, and perhaps if she had the act would have softened him. But the pride of race sustained her, and shortly after the train started and it was over — so soon and so sadly over.

He immediately sought Mme Romenay's room, and with much agitation talked with her of Sylvia's mother, whom he had lost and whom he would never again consent to replace. The new rent in his heart reopened the old wound, and his fiancée being gone he felt himself nearer the dead wife, more ardently remembering her. Thérèse tried to comfort him with tactful words. He formed the habit of going to her almost daily, to speak out his grief to her. He had at last come to know — everything gets known sooner or later — what a tragedy she had passed through, and unconsciously he felt an unconscious comfort in confiding his love sorrows to a woman who had been so greatly tortured by love. She

herself, too easily aroused to sentimental exaltation, unconsciously enjoyed leaning over the past as Juliette over the precipice, and Mark was not there to hold her hand. Never, indeed, did she permit the slightest allusion to the tragedy of her own life, but there were times when her silences were dangerously long. While her companion was reciting the litany of his regrets, she was hearing, like forbidden music, André Norans' cantilena. When alone she lamented her own weakness. Thus by degrees her emotions carried with them her uncertain thoughts and she was struggling between two opposing forces; she was longing for peace, sighing for the repose of her own home, and yet, simply because of the tender confidences that were poured into her ear she was continually agitated. Ah, why was not he there for whose support she longed, he who had rescued her, all wounded and trembling in the embrace of death, — why was he not there?

Another presence came to increase her bewilderment and wretchedness. One day a carriage from the direction of the Oberland brought Edmund de Baulaine and Manette Durban to Caux. They were not dressed like travellers, but seemed rather like two fugitives, who had packed and departed in haste. They had been staying at Avants when Manette's husband and family had arrived. To meet in that mountain hotel! They immediately decided upon flight. Caux was not very distant, so they chose

Caux. Caux is vast and without distinctive character, all the easier to remain unknown there. And had not the unhappy woman, at the moment of her departure, seen, only a few steps from her, her youngest son, grown, healthy and happy, who also looked at her — looked at her and did not know her!

They were playing at being lovers, playing to themselves, and also to the public. Apart, each of them expressed a lassitude that amounted almost to horror. Thérèse, who met the young woman in the passage, was surprised at the weariness of her step, the change in her piquante little face.

Formerly, without being intimate with her, she had known her in society, and she still remembered the scandal caused by her flight. “What, that little Manette undertakes a grand love affair!” “Who could have imagined it?” “What affectation!” “She must be romantic, where everything may be so easily arranged in Paris — so comfortably!” “I thought her husband was so indulgent!” “You will see, he will take her back.” “Within six months all will be as before.” “And the handsome Edmund will lay siege elsewhere.” “Every besieged fortress surrenders sooner or later. It’s inevitable.”

How many such remarks she had heard, relative to one or another Parisian adventure, as a general thing particularly severe upon any sincere, awkward or tragic outcome, as if social safety required that respect for hypocrisy which is the true support of so-

ciety! And a little later — what must have they not have said about herself! She also must have served as the target for comments and sarcasm, all the more because in her directness she had so often blamed the actors of dramas of passion, before she had herself become the victim of love. Until that moment she had hardly thought of this, for passion isolates, and now, meeting a guilty woman who had preceded her in wrong doing, she felt retrospectively the shame of publicity, and blushed.

Manette had not ceased to feel an emotion of repulsion at her own audacity, attaching a dreadful importance to public opinion. She turned away, as if she knew that she was not fit company for her, and when Thérèse bowed to her she hung her head, bowed her shoulders and fled.

Edmund de Baulaine learned from Michael Monestier of Thérèse's presence.

"You are in love with her, I see," he remarked after having patiently listened to Monestier's endless eulogies of Mme Romenay.

"How absurd!" protested Michael in all good faith. "I am the man of one woman and she is dead."

"It is a serious inferiority," observed the other.

Nevertheless, Baulaine, absorbed in his own case, could not refrain from questioning him as to Thérèse's return to the fold.

"It's a fine example. If Manette would only imitate it! Well, the ladies are acquainted with one

another. Why should not Manette call upon her? ”

“ Don’t think of it! Mme Romenay would not receive her.”

“ Well, upon my word! Didn’t both of them go off with a lover? ”

“ It is not the same thing. Mme Romenay is irreproachable now. And her husband is not the man to be indifferent to her associates.”

Michael Monestier was bold to speak almost severely to his interlocutor, as if the position of the two women was not to be compared, and as if he had Thérèse’s honour in charge. Baulaine, indifferent, appeared not in the least wounded, but contented himself with giving another turn to the conversation.

“ So it is all right between them? Why doesn’t Romenay take his wife back to Paris? ”

“ She has been through so much. She is recovering very slowly.”

“ Doesn’t he come to see her? ”

“ He came the last of August, and twice in September.”

“ You keep strict account. It isn’t often. Does he stay several days at a time? ”

“ He goes back the same night.”

“ The same night! A day-time husband! Bad sign! My dear Monestier your chances are good. One who has drunk will drink again.”

His pleasantries were not appreciated. Michael Monestier received them with such bad grace that

Baulaine begged his pardon in a way that grated upon him; he had not intended to speak lightly of Mme Romenay, whose sufferings and bereavement he respected as much as her recent virtue.

He did not fail to laud her recent virtue to Manette as soon as he was alone with her.

One morning Mme Romenay, taking the elevator to go down to the hall, met Manette whose room was on the first floor. The latter was already lowering her veil when Thérèse held out her hand. Manette's "Oh, Madame!" was as grateful as if love had not bowed them both alike beneath his yoke.

Still, they found it very difficult to keep up a conversation. After a few meaningless remarks, they were about to part, when suddenly Edmund de Baulaine's mistress murmured in a beseeching tone,

"I wish I might speak to you, Madame. Will you let me? Don't repel me!"

"Why should I repel you?"

They were in the hall, often deserted in the morning, and they moved to the bay window. A fine, persistent rain was falling, and the mountains were gradually disappearing in fog, while the dull waters of the lake seemed to fill the entire landscape and rise up to meet the low sky. Manette's energy seemed to have been exhausted by the first advance, and Mme Romenay kindly smoothed the way to her confidence.

"You are not happy."

“ Ah, Madame, if you knew ! ” Manette exclaimed, then, suddenly, “ I have seen my youngest little boy, René.”

She described the scene at Avants, the little boy playing close to her, whom she had not dared to kiss, who had looked at her and had not recognised her. She added timidly, almost admiringly,

“ How did you have the courage to do what you have done ? ”

“ You are mistaken ; I did not have the courage.”

In a lower voice, as if confessing a cowardice, Thérèse said, bowing her head,

“ *He* was dead and I thought to die.”

The recollection froze her.

“ It is worse with me,” said Manette after a pause : “ My love is dead.”

“ Why do you not leave him ? Your husband — ”

“ He has written to me, I have his letter here. It burns me. He learned that we had been at Avants, he knows that we are at Caux. He calls me. He will never reproach me.”

“ Then why do you stay ? ”

“ Because of Edmund. He loves me. He will love me always.”

Thérèse, hearing these words, could not repress a doubtful smile. Through Michael Monestier’s indiscretion she knew of Edmund de Baulaine’s disenchantment, his incurable weariness of it all, and his indelicate complaints of his bondage.

How little people know one another, though living side by side! How easily they are satisfied with the most superficial appearances, the most commonplace protestations, the grossest falsehoods! How small an external pretence suffices to enable them to deceive themselves, to spread an apparent calmness over the tragic intimacy! She herself, at least, had always been sincere, had always inspired sincerity in those around her, and yet when in those days she used to return, confused and agitated, from her meetings with André Norans, neither her brow, nor her eyes, nor her lips had betrayed her. She alone had distinguished in the glass the image of a false and guilty woman, and perhaps this image, which she alone could see — perhaps it did not exist.

Her weakness came to the succour of Manette's weakness. People began to come and go in the hall. Young men and girls, eager to get out into the air, to play tennis, were studying the weather. Mark would not have liked that she should be noticed in company with a compromised woman. Quite naturally, with no useless care for logic, the modesty of former days came back to her.

"Will you listen to me?" she asked Manette in a slight tone of authority, which surprised herself.

"Oh, yes! I am willing to obey you, I do not know why. You speak, and one gives you her heart."

She also was submitting to Thérèse's indefinable charm, and Thérèse, who did not believe in it, undertook to make use of it at once.

"Go; go at once without looking back."

"Impossible!"

"Why? It is not a two hours' walk to Avants."

"I cannot walk. I should be afraid. And my baggage?"

"I will send it after you."

"See, it is raining."

"All the better: your going will not be noticed."

"One cannot go away on a rainy day. It must be a day of fine weather, for the sun gives joy, and a little audacity."

"I will go part of the way with you."

"You would do that for me? Are you quite well, now?"

"Yes. Let us go. Will you?"

At the last moment, about to quit the hotel, Manette would have resisted.

"It is impossible. He loves me."

"And you?"

"Oh, me? I don't know."

Thérèse made a gesture of infinite sadness.

"One forgets. I assure you that one forgets."

And the two women, together under one umbrella, took the road to the Oberland, by way of the wooded ravine of the Chauderon. Great drops fell upon them from the pines and beeches. The landscape around them was hidden by the fog. Neither the Dent de Jaman nor the Rocks of Naye were visible. Thus lost to sight, they went on like a little bark upon the sea.

They had ceased to talk. The decision once taken there was nothing more to say. The sound of the wind in the branches carried back the thoughts of both of them, Manette's to her handsome lover who would be so angry, so vexed, so pained, Thérèse's to the *Proz glacier* where André Norans had died, André whom living she would never have left. She would never have been able to leave him, and yet she had not wept for him—but what could she do against life? She did not well understand anything that she had done, since she had lived, against her will, and since death had cured her of her guilty love.

They must be drawing near to *Avants* though they could not distinguish it. Thérèse stopped.

"Here, Madame, let us bid one another good-bye."

"Do not leave me alone, I implore you!"

"I must indeed be thinking of my return, *Caux* is a long way off, and I shall arrive too late for luncheon."

"I shall not be easy, all alone."

"You will arrive in less than half an hour."

"Fortunately. I am tired to death."

At the moment of separation Manette melted into tears.

"It is terrible! I shall never see him again! Tell him—"

"What shall I tell him?"

"Whatever you think best."

While her companion held the umbrella over her she mechanically searched in her reticule for her

vanity box, to make up her face a little. Then she asked,

“Just to give me courage — will you kiss me, Madame? ”

“I will indeed.”

“And you will watch me until I am out of sight? ”

“Do not turn back.”

“I promise, if you will stay there.”

She set out, but in a moment turned back to say, mischievously:

“It is not very gay — going back.”

Thérèse thought — “nor going away ” — but she made no answer. And the erring little woman who was returning to her hearth by the mountain road soon became in the fog a little grey shadow which lost its form, melted away, like a smoke. Yet she did not once turn back. In all docility, she accepted. There close by, when she should arrive half terrified, very weary and wet through, she would find a mature and indulgent husband, who had never ceased to cherish her and to suffer for her absence. Above all, she would find her two children. And most assuredly, to make a suitable entrance she would take out her vanity box before showing herself. It is very important, and in the gravest situations not to be omitted.

“She gets on faster than I,” Thérèse sadly reflected as she stood motionless where Manette had left her. That very day volatile little Manette would resume her own place and no one would reprove her.

She would not bruise herself against Mark's proud, fierce pain, the pain that says nothing and grows deeper in silence.

When at last she could distinguish through the fog the high walls of the Palace Hotel, like an enormous phantom ship, she rejoiced, for it had been a long time that she had hardly been able to drag one foot after the other. This two or three hours' walk, — she did not precisely know how long — had exhausted her. Convalescence had not yet restored all her strength, and her fall had left her a little more frail and less resistant. Edmund de Baulaine was at the door, watching for her, and ran to meet her.

"I have been looking everywhere for Manette. Haven't you seen Manette? Where is Manette?"

He had never come into her presence since his arrival at Caux, and now he spoke brusquely to her, without even saluting her. How was it possible that anxiety could thus transform so well bred a man, one who attached such importance to good manners! Thérèse supported the shock and with her natural truthfulness she loyally replied:

"She is with her husband."

"She is! She has left me — left me forever? It is not possible!"

He still doubted. She went on without haste.

"You must send her baggage after her. To the Grand Hotel at Avants."

He had never been a favourite of hers, and she felt no desire to soften the news of the rupture. She

was not ignorant of his desire for liberation, and she thought he was making a pretence of grief.

"It was you," he asked, "who counselled her to do this?"

"Yes."

And as he so perfectly assumed the appearance of despair, she added, not without some contempt.

"Is it not what you wanted?"

"Oh, not now."

Somewhat surprised, she looked more closely at him. His uncared for moustaches with their lamentable droop, his unshaven cheeks, his discomfited and humiliated air, made him a spectacle at once afflicting and ridiculous. His careless appearance offered a proof of his sincerity. She was touched by it, but she thought "People forget."

She was going in, but he stopped her, "Did she send no word to me?"

"She dreaded too much to give you pain."

"Did she weep much?"

"Much, no. She is courageous."

He could have wished that at least she had wept much. But on this reply he controlled himself better. Thérèse was already leaving him to go to her apartment. She found Juliette there, greatly excited.

"Mamma, mamma, why are you so late?"

"It is not late, my darling."

"It is after luncheon. If you only knew!"

"What happened while I was gone?"

"Papa came and went away again."

"Went away again?"

"Yes. He looked everywhere for you. Couldn't find you anywhere. He is at Montreux for a villa that he is building. He will come back again. Perhaps to-morrow, perhaps day after. Perhaps every day."

"Why did he not wait for me?"

"He did wait a long time. But he got tired at last. Oh, Mamma, you are all wet! And your boots are covered with mud."

Thérèse went to her room to change her clothes. There, at Avants the repentant Manette, Manette whom she had guided and saved, had no doubt found her home, while she — he had not deigned to wait for her a few hours! And it seemed to her as if life was like that interminable walk in the rain and fog, an interminable walk with no certainty of ever reaching home.

VI

THE brilliant conversationalist is to be found at every fashionable watering place, in every Alpine hotel. He is especially in evidence at tea time, or in the evening when the terrace is crowded with listeners. He may be heard artfully balancing his anecdotes, adjusting his paradoxes, developing his systems, pronouncing judgment upon political, literary, or historical subjects. He has his mission, which is to ward off the too deep sense of the influence of nature, whose voice can be heard only when man is silent.

The season at the Palace Hotel in Caux was rather far advanced for a brilliant conversationalist. A few rainy days at the end of September had been enough to put tourists to flight. On the mountains rain is cold. Fires must be built, winter wraps brought out, and the cloudy sky darkens everything for those who have no eye for cloud movements, mist-veiled trees, all that half-hiding of things which resembles the half-hiding of thought and will by the slow succession of minutes and hours. Then October had come, bright and glorious, giving new life to the weary landscape and turning the forest into an immense garden. The hillsides that slope down

to the lake were like terraces of red or golden flowers, bringing out the values of the darker foliage. The dull green of pines served as buffers for the striking tones of maples and beeches; their mingled masses would have been like the heavy tones of tapestry but for the vibrations of the caressing light, stirring them with a thousand vivid thrills. With the first high wind these leaves would be scattered over the ground, leaving bare the black tree-tops, the fine nerving of branches, like beautiful half-nude bodies. One felt that they hardly kept their hold, that already they were falling, that they were like bouquets which one enjoys gazing upon, not more because they are beautiful than because the moment is near when they must be thrown away. And the constant menace of that moment gives to the softness of autumn the touching charm of things that are soon to end.

Both sky and water had taken on that pale blue shade unknown to lands of sun and heat, which tells of the North and of approaching snowstorms. And above the horizon the spreading ruddy vapours were dimming the outlines of things.

On the terrace Mark Romenay and his wife, side by side at a tea table, appeared to be enjoying the lovely fleeting hour. Now and again Juliette, playing with Sylvia Monestier, all the more freely at ease because there were no other children and they had the whole place to themselves, would run up to them, but never for long at a time. If she went too

far away Thérèse would call her back, partly for care of her, but still more for fear of the silence. Mark often came up to Caux for the day from Montreux, where he was settled. And every day that he spent there was a disappointment to them both. She was always gentle and yielding, he always tried to be tender. The memory that both were determined to put down condemned their conversation to the commonplace, or started up whenever they began to exchange their deeper thoughts. Mark, discouraged, vainly made appeal to his pride. Thérèse was no longer his wife, the wife of the days before her forgiven fault, but a widow of whom he had become the melancholy, timid, and awkward betrothed.

She was telling him of Manette Durham's flight, which she had encouraged.

"They no longer loved one another," Mark declared; "and her husband is so weak."

Neither could go farther: each word would have contained an allusion. He envied the weakness of Manette's husband, since it kept him from thinking. And Thérèse despised it, yet asked herself what strength could take its place.

A group took possession of a neighbouring table; two very elegant young women, two young men, and an elderly gentleman, who at once began to perorate. They were French. Then the brilliant conversationalist had not taken his departure, he must still be endured. Through the open windows — the

weather was so mild — floated the mournful chords of a piano, the passionate song of the Death of Yseult. The old gentleman, inspired by the music, began a dissertation upon life. Mark and Thérèse at first paid no attention, but by degrees, in spite of themselves, their attention was attracted. He was not the commonplace talker, who pitilessly imposes his harangues as a merchant imposes his wares, in spite of everything: he had certainly read much, had also evidently experienced much, and what he said did not disparage the immortal close of Tristan, although he denied its truth. From time to time one of the young women would interrupt, dispute his positions, utter a protest in the very name of love. As for the two youths, sporting men, they sucked their cocktails through their straws and took no part in the psychological match, which had little interest for them.

“Yes,” replied the old gentleman to one of these interruptions, “like all our fine romantic girls of to-day you enjoy this ‘wild poem, all rocked by the sea and surrounded by the forest.’ Tristan and Yseult represent to you the inevitability, the omnipotence of love, and why? Because each dies by the other, he by her and she by him. But if one of them had survived?”

“Impossible!”

“Why? Do we never outlive our sentiments, then?”

“Not such sentiments.”

“What do you know about it? Fortunately you know nothing about it. But you have perhaps met, without knowing it, men and women whose hearts have been thus ravaged, who have been silent, and have been able to live on.”

“But what a life!”

“How young you are, my little friend! They might have lived, and lived happily.”

“Then they never loved.”

“They had loved. They too had drunk the fatal draught. Do you remember what Tristan said after he had drunk,—not the philosophic Tristan of Wagner, but the Tristan of the Cornish legend, as a great artist has recalled him to life. *Yseult, what is it that gives you pain?* And Yseult replies, *Ah, all that I am gives me pain, and all that I see — the sky and this ocean and my body and my life!* And when Tristan repeats the question she sighs, *The love of you.* And they forget the world as the world forgets them and there is only they in life, and later in the Forest of Morois.”

“There! you see! You are thinking only of Tristan.”

“I am thinking also of Romeo and Juliet, who also united themselves in death. You remember what Juliet said. After casting away the empty cup, the poisoned cup which Romeo had drained, *Let me kiss thy lips; perhaps they retain a drop of poison, that I may drink and die happy. How warm they are — thy lips!*”

He was becoming impassioned and they exclaimed in triumph.

"You see! You see! Tristan and Romeo — there is nothing more noble than they."

"There is the truth," he replied calmly. "Only men will not endure it. They have no eyes to see that it is the noblest thing for no other reason than that it is. That is why poets try to make us take for audacity what is in reality only the evidence of their weakness. When Tristan is about to fight the giant Morhalt on the Island, he pushes back his bark as he lands, for he wishes to take his risk. And Yseult, when she has received the magic bell whose music will chase away her grief, throws it into the sea that she may keep her grief. But the flood of life brings back both bark and bell. Only those realists, the Greeks, refused to recognise the parallelism of fate. It is fate which binds up destinies, but fate also that unbinds them. No heroine of love let loose so many ills as Helen. And Helen, of all the heroines of love, is perhaps the only true one, for Helen alone is the Survivor."

"The Survivor?"

"Certainly. Only incompetent tragic authors end their dramas with death. It is too facile a method. Troy is razed to the earth, and nothing is left but ruins. Paris, beautiful Paris, is no more. And Helen returns to her home. After so many storms it is not without satisfaction that she returns to peace, to regular duty. See her as she comes

down to the banquet hall with all the majesty of a Diana armed with her golden bow. No one dares speak in her presence of the calamitous war. But with the most natural simplicity she is not afraid to remind the banqueters of the time when Venus upheld her in her power after having snatched her from her native land, her palace, her daughter, and her husband so worthy of her love."

"How horrible!" exclaimed one of the two young women.

"On the contrary, how wonderful! She had submitted to order. Leave those romantic visions that picture love as a desire for which there is no cure. Love, like all things else, is subordinate to the laws of life. It cannot evade them. Thus Helen is to me more touching than Juliet, that unabashed boarding school miss, and than Yseult, that incurable enchantress. Helen is never in a state of revolt against life. Helen forgets when it is necessary to forget. Helen is a woman."

Upon this allusion to the usefulness of forgetfulness, one of the two young women, whether she felt thrown back upon herself, whether from a wish to display a bit of poetic erudition, repeated the plaintive and melancholy lines of a contemporary:

*"Vous m'oublierez, hélas! car il est d'autres soirs
D'autres buts, d'autres pleurs et bien d'autres espoirs,
Surtout pour la raison simple, triste, infinie,
Que l'on ne peut se souvenir toute sa vie."**

* "You will forget me alas! for there are other evenings,

Hereupon, the orator, to resume the upper hand, completed his ode to Helen by a final strophe:

“Nevertheless these same Greeks, for whom love was a sacred ill, an inevitable and temporary ill, celebrated the immortality of conjugal fidelity in Penelope and Alkestis. For the enduring nature of conjugal fidelity rests upon all the forces of the community and the family, and upon that heart-peace which is so dear to a well-born woman of normal health.”

But the final eulogy of marriage met with no response.

The brilliant conversationalist shortly rose and departed, followed by his court. Mark had recognised him as a writer whose limited renown was not equal to his merit, a disciple and almost a rival of Gaston Paris. He had formerly met him in Rome, preaching that renaissance of classicism of which the manifestations abound in the art of to-day.

During his long monologue neither Thérèse nor he had uttered a word, and they still kept silence long after the departure of the group. The autumn landscape, still gilded by the sun, enfolded them in its loveliness, its dying charm.

He recalled to mind his ascent of the Proz glacier, and all his jealous pain in the face of the narrow ledge where the two lovers had agonised for three

*Other purposes, other tears, and many other hopes,
Most of all for the simple, sad, infinite reason
That one cannot remember all one's life long."*

days, the narrow ledge which the snow left hardly visible upon the precipice, the snow which had covered up every vestige of the tragedy.

Had they been found together upon the slope, forever frozen in that embrace, they would have been cited as a pair of lovers. Because she had survived him, was anything changed? Yseult or Juliet may die in legend, the better to poetise their passions. Surviving, would they have ceased to belong to the dead? He repelled the reply of the Prior of Saint Bernard: — *All is changed because she did survive him.*

Like him, even more spontaneously than he, Thérèse was applying to her own case the remarks which she had just heard. She had not contracted the dangerous habit of undirected self-observation, and the glance that she now directed within filled her with surprise and almost with terror. “Yes,” she thought, “Helen simply resumed her natural life, and I have done nothing different. She did not know why she had loved, and neither do I know. I am not a very complicated woman and Mark does not wish to understand me. And if I seek to understand myself, I feel my heart pierced in all directions. I lost my dear lover on the mountain and yet I have since then thought only of Juliette, of my desire for my home, of my husband who will not believe in my love. Helen dared to speak of the past. If I could venture to do so, perhaps I should break the unhappy spell which divides us. Everything might be so

simple, and yet every day increases our discomfort, our distress."

Thus she saw in the truth a means of drawing nearer to one another, while Mark's pride declared reconciliation impossible. Their financial condition, he mentally concluded, could at least lend itself to that sort of separation which is in harmony with the simulation of a common existence. He would soon be setting out for Russia. The entire winter would elapse and would prepare them for such a solution. The one thing to be avoided at any cost was the degrading solicitation of caresses, the enthrallment of the flesh, the inheritance of him who was dead.

Was this silence to last forever? At the close of their reflections, they looked at one another. She was wearing one of those white woollen mantles which are so much in vogue in the Alps for evenings and for the autumn. Under her white cap her hair, once so long and beautiful, now darker than formerly, was beginning to curl a little. Casting about for words with which to open the conversation, she suddenly felt ashamed of what she must reveal, the impossibility of explaining how her guilty love was receding into the background, and becoming a painful memory. Her whole face flushed. Her neck and even her shoulders must have blushed, to judge from the warm tint of her throat. *Y'scult, what is it that pains you? Everything pains me, the sky, and my body, and my life. But if he had repeated What is it that pains you?* She would not have dared to re-

ply: *Love for you*. And yet that was what she wanted to say. And entirely gained over by that unaffected grace, that indefinable charm, of such sure persuasion, which was felt by little Sylvia as well as by any indifferent passer-by, Mark recognised the senselessness of his plan.

"She is a creature made for love," he said to himself, attracted and yet discouraged. "It is impossible not to love her. I do love her, and yet, if I am not a scoundrel, she will never again be mine."

And she, overcome, terrified, by the audacity of what she had in mind, full of confusion, thought to herself: "He is too proud, I could never say it to him — with my short hair, I am no longer pretty. He has ceased to love me."

Michael Monestier and Edmund de Baulaine joined them on the terrace. By degrees they had become Thérèse's daily companions. Was it not because of her that they indefinitely prolonged their stay at Caux, one pleading his little daughter's health, and the other Manette's flight, which had left him nerveless? She was called upon to receive their confidences by turns. In vain had she sought to check them, to avoid them. They pursued her with their sorrowful tales. And beneath their high-strung complaints she dreaded to discover another sentiment, growing under the shelter of these enervating conversations as a strong shrub grows under a parasitic plant. As she had no vestige of coquetry she had sought to reassure herself. Mark had ad-

vised her not to be much alone, and she did not care for the hotel society. Why did not he remain with her? Ought he not to protect her? Had he noticed their advances, or was she indeed self-deceived?

In his recent visits to Caux, he had seen their arrival without displeasure and even with some satisfaction, as if he hoped they would prevent too painful interviews with his wife. But whether he had in fact perceived their unavowed designs, or whether he, himself, now hoped to put an end to what was beginning to be an intolerable situation, he received them coldly and was evidently uncomfortable in their society. He could not bear that any one should be near Thérèse; even Juliette's presence annoyed him. And yet when they were alone he gained nothing by it, except to be desperately wounded by their long silences.

It was the golden hour that precedes the swift-falling October night. The sun was bending to the mountain chain, reflected in the lake as a long pillar of fire, trembling, lengthening, then suddenly diminishing until it is only the reflection of a star, resting on the shoulder of the mountain; a star which shines for one moment with a loud cry of adieu and then vanishes. Shadows, still mingled with rays of light, rise from the water, reach the village and vineyards of the shore, invade the slopes, where but now the red maples were all aflame, and suddenly descend upon the terrace of the hotel. In vain do the high

summits, the Dent du Midi, the Trient, still defend themselves. Their delicate rosy tones, their tints as of flowers, or of living flesh, are growing dark. In their noble sadness it seems as if they, like men, felt in advance their defeat.

"Let us go in," says Thérèse, who is cold notwithstanding her woollen mantle.

"Will they follow her?" Mark asks himself almost disdainfully, and the three men follow, enter her sitting-room, while Mme Acher takes Juliette and Sylvia away.

The hours pass and nothing happens. By and by, very soon, it will be time for dinner, and then it will be time to go to the station for the last train. Mark has no heart to pretend an interest in the languishing conversation. And when Edmund de Baulaine and Michel Monestier, accustomed to make interminable visits, have at last taken their leisurely leave, he tells himself that it is too late to begin to talk, to explain anything. Another time it will be the same thing.

"They interest you?" he asks his wife, almost timidly.

"Oh, no," she replies.

"Then why do you let them come?"

"They are your friends. Ought I to tell them not to come?"

"Why, no, why?"

They are setting the table in the ante-chamber

which serves as dining-room. An intimate conversation has become entirely impossible with the waiter so near, and the clinking of china.

Dinner is served and Juliette returns upon the scene, with her everlasting governess. Fortunately Juliette enlivens the meal a little, with her chatter, her absurd questions, her insistence upon an answer.

Immediately after dessert, Thérèse sends the child to bed in spite of her protestations. Is Thérèse also seeking to come to an understanding? Now it is he who does not lend himself to the attempt, who avoids every occasion of intimacy, regretting it all the time.

Well, it is over! Pitiless time has kept on its way; he must go. And as they are saying good-bye, blushing, she uses the "thou" of the dear old days.

"When wilt thou come again? Soon?"

He is surprised. With nothing but a word she has found the way to his heart. Before he leaves he will give her a gentle kiss. My faith, how small a thing is a man's pride! Shall he yield thus, just for a tender word which really alters nothing, and which she must have used with *the other one*, and with more of truth? He has already got himself in hand and almost rudely he replies.

"I do not know yet — I will let you know."

It is over. He is going down stairs. How hard he was to her and what a heart-broken expression he had read in her face! Why did he hurt her so! —

when she was so kind to him. And in the entrance hall, ascertaining that he still had a quarter of an hour to spare, he ran to the elevator as if he had forgotten something and went up again. He would have just the time to repair his unkindness, to leave her less brutally, to carry away with him a less discouraged expression on her face.

The elevator stopped at her floor and he hastened down the corridor. She was not expecting his return, she would be surprised, pleased, perhaps, and the thought made him happy. He would say, "I didn't half bid you good-bye," would touch her cheek, and hasten back. Should he, like her, say, *thou* instead of *you*? Should he go so far as to kiss her? He was not quite sure, but he hoped so.

At the end of the passage, before the well-known door, a man was knocking, awaiting an invitation to go in — going in. It was Thérèse's room; he could not be mistaken. Who wanted to see her at this late hour? Ah! of course Edmund de Baulaine or Michael Monestier had been watching for him to go, was taking advantage of his absence! She was receiving him, perhaps she herself had planned with him this hideous new treachery. In a moment he charged her with deceit, heaped ignominy upon her. She had had one lover, had he forgotten that, when he showed her such respect and confidence? All the shame of his own love swept over him, measured by the suffering it was causing him.

Hastening after the unknown, he entered: the door was unfastened. Thérèse's terrified voice reached him in the ante-chamber:

"Go! go! or I shall call for help!"

She was defending herself with violence: she was afraid.

"Will you not let me,"—protested Baulaine, for it was he. "Do you not understand?"

But Mark was confronting him:

"Mme Romenay has requested you to leave the room, sir. I invite you to leave the hotel."

"Thou!" exclaimed Thérèse.

Her exclamation, even more than Mark's attitude, put Edmund de Baulaine to flight.

To see her thus distressed, reaching out to him as to a saviour, made Mark giddy, and he clasped her in his arms. She did not defend herself, she yielded to his caress, murmuring timidly:

"Mark, my dear."

Her sweet face, framed in short hair, with the marks of suffering and the delicate skin so quick to change colour, revealed an inward distress. He could not mistake it. The eyes which she fixed upon him were full of dread. Not thus had she imagined their reconciliation. She was like one newly betrothed, alarmed by rudeness yet not struggling against it, who yields in advance to her impatient and ungentle master. She could not, would not resist, she had no wish to resist. And while he bore her, captive and consenting, into her room, lavishing

caresses upon her, she uttered a faint moan, a continuous moan like a little child. In spite of himself he recalled the words of Father Sonnier, who had rescued her from the glacier: *A whine, a moan, like a little dog a few days old.* Was she now enduring the same distress?

He was possessed by desire, even to violence, to cruelty, but not to total forgetfulness and happiness.

The obstacle which had separated them had crumbled away like a wall. Breast to breast they could hear their hearts beat. This was pardon, all was blotted out for ever. And yet she was weeping. Over herself or over her past? She did not know which. She had never fathomed herself deeply, but she could not refrain from weeping. And while he, again overcome by doubt, was asking himself if he had not profaned the past, and his pride, and his very love, she was reproaching herself for not more perfectly showing her affection. She had become once more a bride, awkward and ignorant, her lips mute, and her hands like ice.

By degrees she fell asleep from weariness or weakness. By the glimmer of the night-light, he gazed upon her closed eyes, her pallid cheeks, her moist lips, with their regular breathing. Gently, not to awaken her, he freed himself from her embrace. In her sleep she seemed still to continue that soft lament, and he recalled to mind the despairing moan which could only be heard close at hand, down there

on that martyr-place of Proz. With awful certainty he distinctly saw the vision which one imprudent word had graven for him in marble:

She was lying upon the corpse. They seemed to be one.

He had scarcely presence of mind to suppress an outburst of despair. Hastily, noiselessly, he put on his clothes, and like a thief,—like one who had robbed a corpse, he fled down the midnight road, under the stars that he saw not.

VII

CAUX, October.

“Why did you go, Mark? why did you leave me? This morning when I did not find you, I was cold, as if in winter, and it is indeed winter in me, since you no longer love me. Your wife was all your own and was not able to keep you. I felt a presentiment of it last night when your hand touched my short hair and I felt you draw it back as if involuntarily. I fear you will never again feel anything but aversion for me. I have such need of calm, of happiness, and I see now that I shall never have any again.

“I had Juliette dressed quickly and we went down to Montreux together to find you; I did not know how you would greet me, but if little Sylvia has been able all alone to keep her father’s love, I thought that you would not repel me when I was with our child. At your hotel I learned that you had taken the train for Lausanne on the way to Paris. Then it is indeed true — after last night you want nothing more of me. Then at Saint Bernard, it was only a touch of pity that you had for me, and I thought it was love. Before you arrived I had confessed, and the priest had said to me: ‘Go in peace.’ When you came to my bedside, when you called me ‘My little

Thérèse—*I felt the divine absolution sink into my heart and from you also I heard the word of peace. I was happy, that day. Perhaps it was that that made me get well. Don't you see, that what gives one strength to live is to believe that there is still something in life? I had suffered so much that I detested*

pain. And you brought me, with Juliette, all my hope. Was it that you might leave me again with my empty life, my pitiful hotel life, without home, without family, without love, without thy love? Thou hast given me back my child, but thou hast not given me back thy heart. Thou didst not come to me as I came to thee. I went to thee without a second thought, indeed I went to thee — ah how hard it is to write as I think and feel! I fear that my words will only wound thee. I am suffering for not seeing thee, for not being loved by thee. Dost thou not understand that thou art my life?

“*THY LITTLE THÉRÈSE.*”

CAUX, October.

“*Each of your telegrams brings me the same disappointment. You ask after our health, you tell me of your own, you say nothing of your return. And not even a letter from you. A telegram contains indifferent words, it is brief and without individuality, it can have nothing of oneself. And that is quite good enough for me, is it not? Ah, let me complain, let me tell you my sorrow and humiliation! I am utterly discouraged. I am not like you, hard*

and contemptuous. I am only a simple, sorrowing heart which you have crushed.

“Yesterday I left Juliette with Mme Acher and went early in the morning to the shore of the lake. It was hardly daylight. The season is already late and there is no one but us in the hotel. After M. de Baulaine, who must have left the same day as you, for we have not seen him since, the Monestiers left us. And when the autumn weather grows dark and foggy, I feel sad and almost old. I am dependent upon seasons and days and upon my poor heart. I crossed the lake to Evian and took a carriage to my house in Publier. I would indeed say ‘our house,’ but you never came back there. Yet it was there that we became engaged, and I was so surprised that you wanted me for your wife. You were to me such a grand personage and so intimidating. You never ceased to intimidate me a little, and now I am afraid of you. At the foot of the chestnut avenue I left the carriage and walked alone where we used to walk together. My dear trees had lost nearly all their leaves; they rustled under my steps, or they flew up and fluttered in circles, for there was a good deal of wind. The wind blew so hard that I might have sobbed without hearing myself. There was no one there, and thinking of you, I could weep my fill.

“My house said to me: ‘You have been long in coming back and what have you done with your life?’ But it did not reprove me too much, because it loves me. It has its same high sloping roof and

its tired look that you used to compare with a grandmother's face. But certainly it cannot change. Nor have I changed much — much less than you think. I have the same timid heart, which you were the first to take possession of. Long ago I planted a Bengal rose bush in a corner of a wall. All the roses had been cut, the very last must have been taken. There was only one, quite wide open, which had been left behind. It had not been worth cutting, and all by itself it was living itself away. I pressed it with my hand as if to warm it, but I did not gather it. Poor little thing, it seemed to me that it was I.

“Since you are not coming back to Caux, since you are not calling me back to your house in Paris, whence you have — ah, no, whence I deserved to be sent away, let me come and live here. We have no longer ‘our house,’ but then I shall have ‘my house.’ Here everything reminds me of you. And besides I shall be protected, here, by all the holy women who preceded me here. I promise you that I will teach Juliette to be like them. Ah, may she never be like too-sensitive, too-imprudent me! May she be carefully surrounded and protected! Sometimes I am afraid of her because of myself, and I ask God to help me. A mother who is ready to blush before her daughter — that is very cruel, and I so greatly need to be reassured.

“I am in frightful distress, my friend, since you have disdained me. I had need of your support for my woful weakness. You were so generous, so

great, so far above me. You held out your hand to me at Saint Bernard, and I resolved to kneel before you as soon as I was able. Now it seems to me as if you had withdrawn your hand, and as if I were falling down a steep like that one on the Proz glacier,—that I am rolling into the abyss and cannot even cry out. You forbade me to speak of it, but then you should not have abandoned me.

“Tell me that I may leave this deserted hotel and go to live at Publier. Have pity, and send me a little strength. I am so discouraged.

“THÉRÈSE.”

PARIS, October.

“Thou hast not understood my leaving thee, Thérèse, and I cannot endure to hear thee speak thus of thy humiliation and my disdain. Ah, how far you are from suspecting the truth! You think me strong because pride forced me to be silent. But all my pride was broken that night at Caux, and I offer it to thee with my misunderstood love. It is what I hold most dear in the world, except thee.

“Never speak to me again of pardon, for it is I who should accuse myself of not having been careful enough of thy daily happiness, of our intimacy, of that so easily touched heart, that was weary of my discipline and of my reason, that was athirst for tenderness. Blame me for not having better understood thee, for having attributed to thee vanity and worldly traits which were not thine, for not having

given a better object to thy too acute sensitiveness, for not having better enjoyed thy gentleness in the aridity of my life. Blame me again for my too hasty desires, my too imperious temper, my too contemptuous spirit — contemptuous because it had too early measured human falsehood and baseness, and retained a bitterness from which you ought not to have been made to suffer,— you so new and simple, you so naturally aloof from all perversity and falsehood. Blame me too, for I deserve it, for those brief and shameful betrayals into indulgence to which we men attach little importance because our senses alone take part in them, but which nonetheless leave us with no right to judge as from above and to condemn without hearing.

“I ought not to speak thus. I am the head of the family and it is not for me to abase myself even to raise thee up. But I lost control of myself, and my sole honour now is frankness. Ah, since I am now taking the dark path of truth, let me now tell thee all my wretchedness, and see which of us is most to be pitied. How can you think that I love thee no longer, or that I love thee less than in the old days? Now that I know thee better, Thérèse, I love thee more, and — it is a frightful thing to say — I love in thee even thy cruel love. Ah, you see now that you can never again be mine — never! Ah, that other one whom I no longer hate, who understood thee better than I, who loved thee better than I, though not more than I,— I wanted

to surpass him, and he has conquered me. I am confessing defeat because I have no longer any hope. The other evening, when I carried thee off in my arms like a prey, I took no pity on thy sorrowful face, on thy moaning, on thy memories. I did thee a wrong,—pardon me. He has been well avenged! That night I saw him open his dead eyes, he gazed at us, he took thee to himself and I could not but leave thee to him. You belong to him. He is jealously guarding you against me. He will always be between us. We cannot speak of the past without torturing ourselves, and yet I am in agony for not speaking of it. It has almost been a relief to me to have said these things which must finally separate us. Having said them I come out of the darkness and doubt in which I was struggling. What the future will be for us, I cannot as yet even imagine. For Juliette's sake, who is the bond between us, and who is already too clear sighted, we must act the comedy of a home. You will return to Paris, to your own home. When you have settled the date of your return, I will arrange for my journey to Russia and will set the time, and distance will perhaps give us a little calmness and make it possible for us to endure the semblance of a life in common.

“ Ah, if you had experienced an unworthy love, I sometimes ask myself, if it would not have been easier to forget! But your love will always be stronger than we, whether we will or no. Neither of us can ever forget it, I no more than you, nor you than I.

In your touching letters you lament my affection which you think you have lost, ignorant that you are! But you do not tell me, you cannot tell me, that you love me, and I care only for that.

"Now you know my wretchedness — greater than your own. Now there is no more hypocrisy between us. If I would not debase myself in my own eyes, if I would once more become worthy of that moment when I found thee at Saint Bernard, when I felt the infinite joy of finding thee, I must never see thee again, or at least not until I have got the better of my weakness.

"My mother will go to Caux for you as soon as you wish: the season is growing late: you should come back before winter. She will bring you to Paris. I have asked it of her, that you may return, accompanied by her, to your own home, which, even without me will give you a hearty welcome. This is my desire.

"Adieu my friend, my beloved, till a later day. May Juliette help thee to endure solitude.

"MARK."

"Oh, mamma, your eyes are full of tears!"

"Why no, Juliette, you don't see clearly."

"See! there is one just fallen on your letter."

"Then it is because I am very happy."

"Well, it is not when I am happy that I cry."

"Run away to your lessons, and leave me."

"I will go if you are not unhappy."

"I am not unhappy, little one."

"Surely not, mamma?"

"Look at me; I am laughing."

"Yes, you look like a rainbow."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, rainbows come when it rains. And you are laughing and crying at the same time."

Thérèse Romenay hardly knew what she was feeling while reading her letter. She was always led by her emotions, and this time, though she hardly knew why, her emotions were not devoid of sweetness. She knew that Mark was severe to himself and rebellious against complaint, as rebellious against complaint as André Norans, wounded unto death on the glacier of Proz. She had always admired in him that very imperious and intimidating temper for which he was now reproaching himself, and when a man of such a temperament is willing to admit that he is suffering, he must be really touched. She would never have dreamed that he would ever acknowledge what he was now acknowledging — she was even disconcerted by it. And that suffering, accompanied by so much generosity, at once tortured her and filled her with tender pity.

And yet, more powerful than compassion, another sentiment took possession of her, overspread her with a wave of happiness. After that night at Caux she had thought herself no longer loved. She knew nothing of her power, and this was in fact her charm. Mark had repelled her short hair, her guilty body.

But he had repelled her not because he despised, but because he loved her. Now she could no longer doubt, he loved her even to the abandonment of his pride, even to abase, humiliate himself before her, — her, the repentant one whom once he had turned out of his house.

Might she not have hope in the future, since the future now depended upon herself alone? She did not perceive the strange irony of this complete change in their reciprocal situations. She was too much under the power of her own heart for that. Forgiveness must come from him, but forgetfulness would come from her. Why had she been false to her husband when she was not unhappy? She did not know, because she loved. And why was she faithless to the memory of the lover whom she had lost? How could she know, seeing she still loved? Her guilty love had possessed and yet had tortured her. She had not ceased to love her home when she left it. Her conjugal love had been reinforced by the invincible desire of woman for the peace of her own home. The cruel, inexorable and inexplicable dominance of love was something she could not analyse in itself.

Was she not Mark's wife? She had given herself, a maiden, to him. They had been happy in the home where Juliette was born. A cruel fate had parted them. But he had succoured her, dying, and she had quite naturally become once more his companion. The past was blotted out — why recall it? Was

not that past like a disease of which she had been cured? The dead are dead.

The dead! — She crossed herself and said a prayer for the repose of André Norans' soul. Could she not serve him better by praying for him than by losing herself in memory of him? On that torture place of Proz where she had sustained him with all her courage, she had gently closed his eyes, and she now saw in memory only those closed eyes, and upon his face that serenity which had overspread his features after the dreadful expiation: it was at sunset on that third evening, and his last sigh had not overwhelmed her, she had so long expected it in his lingering agony, so insensible was she herself in her distress.

But what must be the dominance of life, that, herself scarcely rescued from the abyss, she could have called upon her husband and her child, and caught a glimpse, as if she had been free, of the possibility of her return? Even her lover, who for all his love could not make her entirely happy because of the irregularity which was so hard for her to bear, her lover who would joyfully have poured out for her all the blood in his veins, even he had perceived this, in the second-sight of death. And yet she had offered to die with him.

Yes, she was consoled in reading the letter. Since Mark loved her to this point she could take courage again. For her, love was everything.

Toward love she reached out, she lifted herself,

as a plant which the night damps have laid low, uplifts itself with the first rays of the morning.

Juliette, who had made the deserted hotel her palace, and who, evading the pursuit of the leisurely Mme Acher was delightedly exploring the passages under the indulgent oversight of chamber-maids glad to be for a moment disturbed in their idleness, was suddenly surprised by the discovery of her grandmother. She showered kisses upon her, and then led her in her train like a distinguished captive:

“Come quick! come quick! How pleased mamma will be!”

She rushed into the room with a cry like that of a herald at arms, announcing some great personage with the blast of a trumpet.

“Mamma, mamma, a visitor — guess who!”

“Your father,” whispered Thérèse with beating heart.

“No: — grandma.”

Madame Romenay followed the child into the room. Before the majesty which virtue lends to age Thérèse blushed, suddenly felt all the burden of her sin, and dared not move forward to meet her visitor.

“Oh, Madame!”—

“My daughter!” Mark’s mother said simply, and took her into her arms.

She received her back with a peculiar tenderness, as if after a long absence or a long illness, and by this welcome made all embarrassing explanations un-

necessary. Thérèse found her own place in this maternal heart, just where she had left it. A swift rush of gratitude impelled her to the elder woman, who with one act had taken her back into her esteem, had given her back her love, and with so much dignity as to forbid anything like a confession, and to impose silence upon the past.

Madame Romenay had come to take them back to Paris.

"I am troubled about Mark," she said when Juliette had left them. "He is melancholy and nervous. You ought to be there."

"He has spoken to you?" asked Thérèse, dropping her eyes, the tell-tale blood, quick to take alarm, flushing her cheeks.

"No, but I clearly see, when I am with him, that his thoughts are far away, with you."

"Did he send you?"

"He wanted me to come, but waited for you to ask for me. I came without letting him know."

They passed the day in intimate converse which each was secretly surprised to find so easy. With that marvellous capacity of the woman's heart to reveal its inmost sympathies under the ordinary meaning of words, they found themselves in harmony as if one were simply informing the other of changes that had taken place in the house. In returning to the rue de Franqueville Thérèse would not find herself a stranger: she would know about Mark's work, his new plans, his ambitions. Without being taught she

would know all that it was important for her to know. But by degrees as the hours passed she began to show signs of apprehension. The trunks were quite ready when she whispered, leaning coaxingly on Mme Romenay's shoulder.

"Listen, mother, listen to me but do not look at me."

"What is it? Tell me!"

"I cannot go back so."

"Why not?"

"When I find myself at the door — at the door of the house — I shall be ashamed, I shall run away. The last time —"

"Oh, hush, Thérèse; he has —"

Unwilling to wound her she checked herself before the word "forgiven."

"Not entirely."

"You are frightened at nothing."

"No, no, I assure you. Take Juliette. She is my surety. I cannot part with her without weeping. Then, if he wants to give her back to me he will come, himself, for me."

"And you will stay here?"

"Not here, no. But to-morrow I will go to my little house at Publier."

"It is so long since you left it."

"Oh, I shall easily find some good woman in the village who will keep house for me. I shall not need much. The luxury of this place overwhelms me.

Down there I shall wait for him. I shall wait for him until he comes. Tell him, mother, that I am waiting for him."

She added with a confident smile,

"Let him not be too long in coming!"

Mme Romenay did not insist, although she found it hard to understand her desire, dimly perceiving in her daughter-in-law a mysterious spring, an ardour for life, which she herself had never known.

Between two generations there are always unoccupied spaces which no one, or almost no one, ever crosses. Thérèse could no longer be satisfied with returning to her home: she wanted to be brought back by her husband. Why this unexpected condition? For what reason was she thus exacting? She did not think about it, she did not excuse herself, she was without vanity, but she expected everything of love.

The parting was painful. Juliette refused to leave her mother, plaintively begged that she might remain with her, and both melted into tears. The former separation, already becoming dim in her little memory, suddenly recurred to her mind with all its pain and mystery. One evening her mamma had not come home, and a great while after, when she had ceased to think about her, they had found her on the Grand Saint Bernard. No, no, she would not again run such a risk. She threw her arms about her mother's neck and clung to her with obstinate vio-

lence. And from her eyes poured those big tears which, on the little face of a child, are as revolting as an injustice.

Thérèse, almost ready to yield, suddenly conceived the idea of speaking to her as to a grown person, appealing to her reason, giving her a part to perform. She charged her to inform her father that she was not able to undertake so long a journey without him.

"I am still too weak. You will tell him so, will you not? You will tell him, and if you do he will come. And we then will never part again."

"Is that really true, mamma?"

"I have never deceived you."

No sooner had she uttered the words than she felt her face overspread with the flush which was so prompt to reveal her reserves and her emotions. Mme Romenay observed it and turned away to give her time to recover herself.

Juliette, calmed at last, was promising to be good.

"Papa will come for you and you will never go away again."

"Oh, no, my darling."

Thérèse went with them to the station, which is close by. When she returned the hotel was deserted, her chamber empty, and she began to be frightened at the solitude that surrounded her.

Solitude is too favourable to the invisible forces of memory. Thérèse was disquieted, agitated. What could be the matter with her? She turned on

all the electric lights; light is a refuge from fear. Light drives away nightmares and dispels phantoms.

What phantom was there to dread in this comfortable hotel? André Norans is sleeping in the snow. He cannot awake. She used to say to him, "My dear love." His only happiness was in her. The rest of the world was either indifferent to him or wounded him. He used to speak in radiant words. He was at once so good and so tender. Why was she thinking so much of him? Ah, Juliette was not there, close beside her, to protect her from herself. She was alone,—too dreadfully alone. She must never be left alone again.

And so André Norans comes back. He is at the door, about to enter. He is there, but she does not see him. She is expecting him: is she not glad to be expecting him? She holds behind her the hands that he used to love so much, *her hands, more alive than herself*. She is all fever and chills, as in the old days when she used to go to meet him,—all fever and chills—are they of desire, or of fear? She shrinks back, back to the farthest corner of the room. Ah, God! he is there! He claims her, he will take her, he demands her heart!

Had she not closed his eyes? And yet he is looking at her. Oh, that look of love and reproach! Of eternal love and reproach for her forgetfulness! She cannot endure it, she struggles, and in the silence she cries out, in a voice which she herself does not

hear, as she had cried out up there, on the glacier. She cries out, and whose name does she call?

“Mark! Mark!”

It is Mark's name that comes spontaneously to her lips, and not André's. For he represents the protection of her days, the serenity of her life, the good order of her passionate heart.

Her involuntary cry dispels the vision. The dead are dead. And reassured she can now weep over *her dear love*, her forgetfulness, her darkened heart.

She must never be alone, never any more. She is so weak! But will Mark come for her? She is his wife, he has taken her back. And when he took her back, so fiercely, she perhaps felt frightened, as on her marriage night. Yet it was not for that that she suffered the next day, as he thought it was, but because he had left her in the night.

If Mark does not come, what will become of her?

VIII

“PUBLIER, the last day of October.

“I am all alone in the house where we were betrothed, Mark, expecting you at any moment. Do not wait too long. It is all so sad,—the low clouds that threaten snow, the chestnut walk, down which I go to see if you are coming. Its leaves are falling, and my heart most of all.

“Come for me, I implore you. I cannot enter our home except with you. Then it will seem as if the old days had come back. Does not my little Juliette ask for me? And you—if you love me, come soon. I love thee and am waiting for thee.

“THÉRÈSE.”

Every day, and many times a day, Thérèse leaves the house and goes down the avenue to the road. It is one of those old places, which having no other inclosure than a ruinous and useless fence, seems to have confidence in all comers and welcomes them without asking for their credentials. From the road one can see far—very far, even. The village of Publier, a combination of hamlets, villas, and isolated farms, from its terrace of broad fields and glorious woods overlooks Lake Lemán, which here describes

a long curve. In sunny days it is a scene of delight. But the mists of late autumn overshadow all the landscape, and the lake seems like the sea, for the Swiss shore and the Jura mountains, as grey as the water, seem to prolong it to the very horizon.

Thérèse looks only at the road. It is not much travelled, few carriages pass by, only ox carts with their solemn progress. But some one might come from Evian on foot; it is not a long walk, and the surprise would be all the greater. Yet she feels the influence of the sad decline of autumn, that veils colours, softens sounds, and diminishes hope.

Thérèse is sensitive to times and seasons, to the impulses of her own heart! Wrapped in her white woollen mantle she is as cold as if it were winter. At the end of the avenue she grows impatient — turns back, returns again, like one expectant. She can make up her mind neither to go or stay.

Sometimes she walks on as far as the cemetery, which is beside the road, and which in these November days seems like an ancestral home, full of relatives and adorned with flowers. Just beyond is the church, its tapering spire seeming to pierce the sky. If she stays there long, she almost flies back to the house, and has hardly given the old peasant woman who keeps house for her time to answer the bell, when she asks:

“ Did anyone come while I was out? ”

“ No one, Mademoiselle Thérèse.”

She is Mademoiselle Thérèse for the whole village. To be sure she was married, but no one has seen her since then, and she looks so like a girl, especially with that short hair! She appears so disappointed that old Annette inquires with interest,—

“You expected some one?”

“Of course.”

“Who, then?”

“My husband.”

Her husband! None too respectfully Annette bursts out laughing! Every wrinkle in her pippin face shines with her hearty laugh. Like all Savoyard peasants she loves a joke.

The idea! A pretty lady like Mademoiselle Thérèse eating her heart out, and able to settle to nothing, just because her husband doesn't come! Ah! if *her* husband, who drinks and has a heavy hand, should stay away, she wouldn't bother her head to ask when he was coming back! A husband always turns up sometime: he can no more be lost than a field, or a chest of drawers.

“Husbands don't get lost, Mademoiselle Thérèse.”

“You are sure, Annette?”

“Sure as anything.”

In her secret heart the good woman was not sorry to be herself reassured. She was too clever not to have observed the tricks and manners of summer visitors who come from Evian for secret meetings in the neighbourhood, and whose conduct is far from Catholic! A pretty woman who is married, yet al-

ways without her man — there is some mystery, surely. But so long as it was only her husband that her mistress was expecting there was nothing to be said. All these comings and goings that had so puzzled her proceeded from the best of motives.

The postman is another object of solicitude. Thérèse goes to meet him, asks him prettily for her mail. Usually there is nothing.

“Ah! a letter from Paris, Madame.”

It is from Juliette, who awkwardly, but gaily — the dear, naughty child! — tells of her arrival in the rue de Franqueville. How easily children are amused! How soon they forget! And how right they are! If one would live must not one forget? Juliette makes no mention of her father's departure. She only says that he does not yet know whether he shall go to Russia for the winter.

Thérèse reads and rereads the artless letter and is none the happier. Why did she part with her little girl? She ought never to have thought of such a thing. She had hoped that the separation would hasten Mark's coming and Mark does not come. Her heart calls out to him from afar, and he does not hear her.

One afternoon as she was going out for her lonely walk Annette tried to dissuade her.

“Mademoiselle Thérèse, this is weather for staying inside.”

“Why?”

“The sky is falling on our heads. It is going to

rain. And in this cold the rain is likely to turn to snow."

"It is all one to me."

She explored the chestnut avenue. The night blasts had detached the last leaves, which indeed had only remained on the branches as by a miracle. The naked trees stood out black against the almost white sky, which hung so low that she felt as if in a prison. The mountains were visible and the still lake seemed like a dead pool. A flock of crows rose up from a field, and flew above her with ill-omened croaks. She is superstitious and these croaks freeze her blood in her veins. Yes, the snow is coming, and the winter, and her heart is cold.

She has reached the last chestnut tree, on the edge of the highway. It has a large trunk and its roots have upheaved the ground. She leans against it with all the weight of her body. It is a friend, she knows it well. It will help her to wait. But she cannot remain quiet, she wrings her hands, they tremble, reveal all her anguish. *Those hands more alive than herself.* The prolonged waiting has exhausted her nervous strength. All her heart is in her eyes which search the road, questioning. Discouraged, she is tempted to crouch at the foot of the tree, not to move again, weep her heart out, and remain there, a little lost thing, till some one comes to gather her up.

Putting a force upon herself she leaves her refuge and searches farther, farther, and farther yet. She

rushes to meet him with flying steps. He will come to-day or he will never come. She says that to herself every day. But when she returns weary and despairing, there is Annette beckoning to her from the door step.

"Eh, eh, Mademoiselle — Madame Thérèse, he has come!"

"Who?"

Has she lost her confidence, that she asks such a question?

"Why your husband, to be sure."

"Mark!"

She hastens in spite of weariness, and is in the vestibule, the old woman pursuing her with her remarks.

"Didn't I tell you? Husbands always turn up."

He had come by another road, and she was disappointed that he had not seen her watching for him. She had persuaded herself that their meeting would be in the avenue, where they had been betrothed, that the chestnut trees would protect her, bless her.

Where was he? Why did he not show himself? Had he not heard her, recognised her step and her voice? Then the door of the little parlor opened, and he was there.

They were face to face, and she had so quickly reached up for his kiss that he had had no time for hesitation. The disappointing meeting at Caux would not repeat itself.

He was the first to speak: "I have come for you, Thérèse."

"How I have waited for you!"

They dropped their arms and gazed into one another's faces, not with the gaze of those who go from love to acquaintanceship, nor with that which veils acquaintanceship with love. Their faces were not new to one another, but they were seeking in them the love that lasts through acquaintanceship.

Might she not exult, since he had returned? She had waited for him long, but he had come. Her desire was granted. She would go back with him to the home whence he had driven her away. Together they would cross the threshold which had been forbidden her. With her short hair she is less beautiful than formerly, but she knows now her woman's power. And yet she does not exult. She is trembling and blushing before him who is there, close beside her. Twice she had measured his strength: when he sent her away, and when, in the cell on Saint Bernard, he forgave her. It is terrible and sweet, contemptuous and tender, imperious and subject to the desires of the flesh. She wonders how she had dared to be unfaithful, and she becomes suddenly aware of the extent of her guilt, for she no longer feels the tug of that mysterious and fatal impulse which had led her away. And because she is freed from that yoke she can no longer understand the past.

She could no longer understand that dear past, but Mark understood it better. She had not withdrawn the hand that she had laid upon his shoulder and her cheeks were still crimson, from the slowly retreating blush. She was timid, like one newly betrothed, frightened by caresses, and yet hoping for them. And he remembered what she had written of André Norans: *That happened and it gave me no joy. . . . I loved him in terror.* Again he heard the sad appeal of her lover. *For your fear of your own heart,— for your resistance to my love and also to your own — for the impossibility that I can ever give you perfect happiness — I love you.* Yes, this slight, delicate creature, so simple and so alive, whose whole thought is to win him back, whose whole interest is in her home, who had consumed herself in expecting him — she had been faithless to him, and he loved her. She had been faithless because her soul and her body tortured her and he had not watched over her carefully enough, had not expected enough of her; and he loved her more than ever and had had the weakness to confess it.

She was the first to turn away, troubled by the silence.

“ See,” she said, “ it is snowing.”

They crossed over to the window. The narrowed landscape included only the chestnut avenue. Flakes of snow were falling like a rain of flowers upon the branches, upon their smallest twigs; the

ground was already white, its surface made irregular by heaps of fallen leaves.

She had passed a long night on the Proz glacier, face to face with the horror of being buried alive with André Norans. Yet she was not thinking of that, while he was living over again his pilgrimage with Father Sonnier, searching vainly for the traces of them which the snow had covered. Material things may be modified, landscapes may change with the seasons and the weather, but of human existence the memory remains, memory which is existence fixed, rendered motionless, final,—memory which nothing can blot out. How was it that she did not know this? How could she forget? Could it be true that, as the Prior had said, women “are more subject than we to the forces of life, and do not confuse what is with what has been”?

She could not quite divine his thought, but she felt the direction in which thought was again leading him astray. To dispel the painful dream she spoke of Juliette, but even this magic word was powerless to bring them together. For a moment she fixed her eyes upon his closed lips, trembling with one single question, which yet they refused to utter. His kiss would never be sincere until those lips had been unsealed.

She saw that the moment had come when it was for her to speak. Softly sighing, yet at once brave and pleading, she leaned against him and whispered,

“Listen,”

The word warned him, and he tried to stop her.

"No, no, Thérèse. On the Saint Bernard I made a vow that we would never speak of it again."

"You did, but not I."

"Do not speak, I beg you."

Instinctively she went on in the face of his entreaty.

"I must, Mark, because I want to be happy with you. I have never been happy without you."

What would she say next? This was denial. She hardly perceived it, and yet she was overcome by a dim terror of what she had dared. It was denial, and he was ashamed for her.

"Do not speak. Keep that love intact. I do not ask such a sacrifice of you. I shall love you truly all the same."

She was disconcerted by his generosity, fearing it to be a sign that he did not love her. For love is not generous. She had come to him with unfettered hands; why did he put on her shackles again? She could not quite understand herself, since he excused her for having loved, while she was accusing herself of having done wrong. She only understood when Mark, who in pride, or with false disinterestedness, had thought to raise himself above human feeling, without perceiving that so doing he was losing his headship, and his honour as head, fell back again into an agony of envy.

"Ah, you cannot love me better than him!"

She sought for the means to convince him. If

necessary she would go to the very depths of the truth. The present and the future took entire possession of her, to them she was ready to make any sacrifice. Gently, almost unconsciously, she began:

“Mark, I always loved you better. Listen, you must hear me. Up there on the glacier where we were lost, I saw him die and I closed his eyes.”

“I know, I know, do not go on.”

“No, you do not know what I did then.”

Mark started, gazed at her in surprise, then as if greedy for further torture, repeated:

“What you did then?”

Now it was she who hesitated, tried to shut out the vision: “Ah, it is horrible!”

But he insisted: “What you did then?”

She gathered herself together, with knitted brows, her shoulders convulsed with a long shudder.

“I searched for the bit of bread that he had not eaten. It was hard, my teeth were chattering, but there beside him, I ate it. I wanted to live.”

Both were silent, like accomplices in a crime. Finally she went on:

“That night, that fearful night, I called for you. I called for Juliette.”

Exhausted by her effort, she bowed her head and gave utterance to a long moan, like that which Father Sonnier had faintly heard as he descended from Proz to rescue her.

Would not Mark rescue her? He laid his hand upon that bowed head, no longer protected by its

mass of hair. He had fathomed, as it had been a deep abyss, the cruelty of love,—the cruelty which had been visited upon himself without ever ceasing to deplore his suffering, and which now was visited upon the dead with no thought of belittling the past,—the cruelty which he felt only because he was a man, more burdened than a woman with futile logic, less gifted than she with vital instincts. Henceforth he would know how to guard Thérèse's too tender and spontaneous, too dangerous heart. It was a treasure not to be entrusted to her weakness and his flattery; he claimed the right of keeping a permanent and armed guard over her.

At Saint Bernard, with a mighty impulse he had attained to the truth. The forgiveness which had transported him with an unknown joy had come from that in him which was divine. But because of the infirmity of human nature, the forgiveness that ransoms may also debase. Deformed, it soon becomes either cowardice or compliance. He had felt this at Caux, in his shattered pride, the savage violence of his desire. Perhaps that humiliation had been necessary to restore him to humility and to consideration for her. It was not his own happiness nor even the happiness of Thérèse that love demanded,—not that, but that power of inward perfection by which life is enriched, enlarged, until the end; far beyond the overlived, lost days of youth. Happiness—he would never again know that happiness to which one abandons himself, in which he feels himself immersed

as in a limpid flood. But had he known it even when she brought to him her freshness and her trust? Henceforth that was not the essential thing. Let her, so bowed down under the weight of memory, be forevermore set free! She, better than he, had found herself, better than he she had accepted with all her will. She might even know happiness through him, if at last he could be strong enough not to seek it in the past, to keep his own secret of sorrow, should sorrow, in which he had lost the right to indulge, inevitably return.

Thus he discovered the road-chart of his future; thus for her and for himself, he learned the pathway to peace.

“Thérèse,” he said, with authority, “lift up your head. I want to see your face. Now, yes, now we have buried the past with our own hands. I give you again the forgiveness of Saint Bernard, and this time more freely. I believe in you. You are my wife.”

His wife! Uplifted, confident, she raised her eyes to him, then lowered them, awkward and timid as one newly betrothed, so grand he seemed to her, so imperious and generous, so deeply she felt him the master of himself and of her, so clearly she recognised and was proud to recognise in him her head. Only a moment ago she was weeping over her sin. Now the grace of love and the strength of life had restored her to her early purity. Yet one thought stirred her and made her blush, for she was beginning a new life.

“At Caux,” she whispered, “I could not have

given myself to you if I had not been yours already."

The next morning he was surprised not to find her beside him, nor anywhere in the house.

"Where is she?" he asked old Annette.

"In church, to be sure. She took her prayer book."

In church. Just as she had found it natural to bring Manette Durban back to the fold when she herself had returned to it, so Thérèse had found it natural to resume her habits of religion. Everything in that old family home lent itself to this. It is not for nothing that one breathes the atmosphere created by a long line of good, pious women.

Mark hastened after her. It had snowed the previous evening and a part of the night, but the sun was shining and without as well as within him all was lightness, enchantment. The blue of the sky and the blue of the lake, somewhat paled by autumn, were wedded with the white brilliance that overspread the plain, the mountains, and the shore. The frosted trees bore numberless flowers, as in good years apple and almond trees bear their flowers in spring, and these white snow-flowers, touched by the sun's rays, took on faint tints of gold and rose. The spreading chestnuts of the avenue bore their wealth with majesty.

Mark spent only a moment looking from the porch upon the fairy spectacle. The print of a little shoe

on the earth was far more important in his eyes. He followed the tracks that led him to the church in Publier. A bell struck as he arrived, it was the end of the Mass. Thérèse, in her white woollen mantle and her hat with gull's wings, appeared in the doorway. She blushed on perceiving him, and he thought of the white snow-flowers, tinged with the sunlight. The new forms of things seemed in harmony with his renewed youth.

Before quitting the altar, the priest had uttered the sacred words: "Go in Peace." And she bore that peace with her.

Mark, gazing with admiration upon her face, her springing step, thought that the Prior of Saint Bernard was right when he said that the human will has power to remit sin only when it leans upon divine strength.

They returned together slowly, notwithstanding the sharp cold, the better to realise in themselves the regular and orderly emotions of their hearts. A little way from the door they paused, and turning back they saw along the avenue the mingled imprints of their footsteps. "We were engaged there, do you remember?" she said.

They had been walking in the footsteps of other days. Yet he recalled to mind, he would often still remember, his pilgrimage to the Proz glacier, and Father Sonnier seeking for traces of the accident, and not finding them, because the snow had covered them. Thus forgiveness and forgetfulness, his for-

givenness and Thérèse's forgetfulness, were effacing the past as snow effaces footprints.

"My little Thérèse!" he said, as he had said at Saint Bernard.

The tender words, as to a little child — these were what she loved best to hear. They reminded her of her weakness, her need of guidance and self-renunciation.

She might have replied, "My love"—so fully was she possessed by the present. She might have used those same words without thinking of evil. But other words, never spoken by her before, came instinctively to her lips.

"My life!" she breathed.

On that martyr place of Proz, he had thought in his despair, "There is nothing in all the world but love." And the monk, as if replying to his thought, had said, "There is life."

There was life, always in action, severe and determined as a marching army, making use even of the past as material for its reconstructions — life with its need of order and its natural aloofness from all that disturbs order, its possibilities of greatness and perfection, its eternal pursuit of peace through war, its unsatisfied desires, its foundation of bitterness and anxiety; life which leads to God or to nothingness; — life, stronger than love that is a part of it.





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